

The article was received on June 23, 2021, and accepted for publishing on November 28, 2021.

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Typology of individual values of combatants of the War in Eastern Ukraine

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Abstract: The individual values of combatants determine life goals, how to achieve them, and perform an important adaptive and protective function under conditions of combat stress. Understanding them enables mental health professionals to create an effective system of Combat and Operational Stress Control for military personnel.

The purpose of this research was to determine the personal value sphere typology of individual values of combatants of the War in Eastern Ukraine, and, on its basis, to predict the vector of PTSD development.

The value sphere (Rokeach Value Scale) and peculiarities of mental status ("Traumatic Stress Questionnaire") of nine hundred forty three Ukrainian combatants were investigated.

Cluster analysis made it possible to create a typology of combatants' values, consisting of five types: "Passionary", "The one who does not leave the comfort zone", "Romantic", "Formal military man", "Routine". The most resistant to combat stress are combatants who are aimed at interiorizing values, expanding the boundaries of existing norms, and public recognition ("Passionary" (2.19%), "Romantic" (3.82%)), and the most vulnerable are those who are "Routine" (15.30%) and "Formal military man" (4.37%). The majority of Ukrainian combatants have a defined type of "The one who does not leave the comfort zone" type (74.32%). For them, safety and well-to-do life are the main priorities.

Keywords: values, posttraumatic stress, hostilities, combatants, Ukraine

INTRODUCTION

Values are the core motivators behind actions that underlie individual decision-making and affect human interaction. They are a strong guiding force, consistently determining behavior and shaping attitudes [1-2]. The values of the military personnel of the armies of different countries are based not only on individual universal human values but also on specific military values, such as loyalty, duty, unselfish service, respect, honor, courage, self-sacrifice, patriotism, etc [3-5]. Despite the national differences, there is one international military culture in the world that reflects common values [6].

In combat conditions, the value sphere of a soldier performs an adaptation function [7]. It contributes to the preservation of basic individual and military values [8], their change [9-10], as well as the formation of new value orientations [11-12]. The value sphere of the personality allows us to

experience the influence of trauma softer and determines the vector of development (posttraumatic growth) [13-14] or personality regression [15].

Modern research on the value sphere of a personality after exposure to various extreme situations is based on four fundamental theories of values of C. Kluckhohn, G. Allport, M. Rokeach, and S. Schwartz. These studies focus on the relationship between posttraumatic stress symptoms and

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personal values of crime victims, and as well as between adjustment disorder symptoms in individuals exposed to critical life events [16-17]; changes in the value sphere of the personality of military personnel due to the stressful or traumatic events [10, 18]; the influence of the soldiers' personal values on the occurrence of depression, anxiety and somatoform symptoms [19]; the influence of traditional and modern values on human mental health [16, 20-21]; the influence of values on pathological addictions [22-23] and etc.

Researchers claim that values do shed light on the behavior, actions, and attitudes of individuals and have a wide variety of predictive qualities [24]. Maercker et al. [16] have found out that modern values (achievements, hedonism, stimulation) protect against stress by mediating the processes of social interaction. At the same time, traditional values (conformity, benevolence, customary orientation) increase stress through the same mechanism. It disproved the popular assumption that traditional values contribute to the preservation of health, and modern values worsen it [20-21].

The above is also supported by studies by Zimmermann et al. [19-25], who found that a strong and conscious personality value system can help to protect military personnel from developing psychogenic depression, and posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) in a combat situation. At the same time, values that are formed from a deep sense of altruism and partnership increase subjective distress if PTSD occurs [19]. The military personnel with such values is more psychologically vulnerable. If they witness torment (worry) during the service, then they experience them as their own [19].

Thus, it is clear that the values of combatants perform an important adaptive and protective function under conditions of combat stress. Understanding of them enables military mental health professionals to create an effective system of Combat and Operational Stress Control (COSC) for military personnel.

Since 2014, full-scale hostilities have been waged in Eastern Ukraine between the official defense structures of Ukraine and illegal armed groups of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk republics. Military personnel of the Armed Forces of Ukraine and the National Guard of Ukraine (NGU) is taking part in this war against the separatists. As of 2019, more than 370 thousand Ukrainian military men took part in the hostilities [4]. All of them were exposed to combat stress, which caused many changes in their mental state, impaired adaptation and behavior, the appearance of various mental disorders, as well as the transformation of the value sphere

of the individual [7, 11, 26]. The researchers also found out that the value orientations of combatants, in terms of their significance and meaningfulness, are more differentiated than those of military personnel without combat experience [27-28]. After participating in hostilities, most combatants began to value life and control it better, in contrast to military personnel without combat experience [28]. At the same time, they developed a pronounced polarity in their assessments of life values: they began to comprehend life-meaning orientations more deeply or on the contrary, lose their meaning in them [29].

The researchers suggested that military personnel with different value spheres will react differently to combat stress that will make it possible to perform a more differentiated choice of tactics for providing first psychological aid in a combat zone and determine measures for the rehabilitation and prevention of PTSD [30-31].

Consequently, the purpose of this research was to determine the typology of the personal value sphere of military personnel who took part in hostilities in the East of Ukraine, and on its basis to predict the vector of PTSD development.

Hypothesis 1. Combatants with different personal value spheres can be grouped into separate clusters (types) depending on the content of individual value constructs, indicators of acute stress disorder (ASD), depression, and PTSD.

Hypothesis 2. Combatants with different types of personal value spheres have different susceptibility to combat stress, which will make it possible to predict the severity of an acute stress reaction, a tendency to develop depression, and the further development of mental disorders, in particular PTSD.

METHOD

The research was conducted in 2016-2017. Nine hundred forty three male NGU military personnel of different categories (officers, contract military servicemen) were involved in this research, they all took part in hostilities in the East of Ukraine. The duration of a trip to the combat zone ranged from one to three months.

All combatants were informed about the nature of the research of values and manifestations of traumatic stress before completing the method forms.

All participants have given consent for their data to be used in this research.

The features of the value sphere of the combatants were studied using the Rokeach Value Scale (RVS), adapted into

Russian [32]. The respondents received two lists of values: terminal (goals that a person wants to achieve throughout life) and instrumental (ways to achieve terminal values). Each list consisted of 18 values, which were arranged in alphabetical order. Each value was accompanied by short phrases that explained its content. The research was conducted on paper. The respondents ranked the values on each list from most important (1) to least important (18). The respondents built a hierarchy out of their individual value priorities. The processing of the data obtained was carried out by comparing the selected ranks of different types of individual value spheres. The average value for each ranked value was calculated by counting (summing) the individual assessments of the respondents. For the data presentation, we used basic descriptive statistics (frequency n (%), arithmetical mean M , standard deviation SD).

The types of combatants' individual value spheres were determined using the cluster analysis procedure (K-means).

The features of the mental status of combatants who underwent the impact of extreme (combat) factors were studied using the "Traumatic Stress Questionnaire" by I.A. Kotenev [33]. The presence of such manifestations of traumatic stress in the posttraumatic period as hypervigilance, hypertrophied reaction, aggressiveness, impaired memory and concentration, the level of depression, anxiety, drug abuse, hallucinatory experiences, and sleep disturbances were determined in combatants. The research was conducted on paper. The questionnaire contains 110 statements which were rated by the respondents according to a 5-point Likert scale. The maximum (5 points) to the greatest extent corresponded to the mental state of the respondent at the present time, the minimum (1 point) absolutely did not correspond to the mental state of the respondent. The average value for each indicator of the combatant's mental state was calculated by counting (summing) the individual assessments of the respondents. As a result, three generalizable indicators were calculated: ASD, depression, and PTSD. For the data presentation, we used basic descriptive statistics (frequency n (%), arithmetical mean M , standard deviation SD).

The statistical analysis of the results of the study was carried out using the program SPSS 17.0.

We presented the ratio of the identified types of the value sphere of combatants and the vector of development of PTSD in the form of a circular configuration proposed in the theory of values of Schwartz [34]. Values that appear across from each other on the circle are values directly in conflict, whereas values next to or near each other on the circle are more closely related.

RESULTS

The conducted cluster analysis made it possible to distinguish five types of the value sphere of personality among combatants: "Passionary" (Type 1), "The one who doesn't leave the comfort zone" (Type 2), "Romantic" (Type 3), "Formal military man" (Type 4), "Routine" (Type 5). The types of the value sphere of the combatants' personality are presented in Table 1.

As can be seen from the Table, terminal values of the most common second type (74.32%) of the value sphere of the personality of combatants conditionally form several groups. The most significant value for them is "Health (physical and mental)", followed by a group that combines "Love" and "Happy family life". The third block is "Financially secure life", "Faithful friends", "Life wisdom" and "Active life". The fourth group is formed by "Interesting job", "Public mission", "Development" and "Self-confidence". The lowest indicators of terminal values have "Productive life", "Freedom", "Cognition", "Beauty of nature and art", "Happiness of others", "Entertainment" and "Creativity". In achieving life goals (terminal values), combatants of the second type give preference to such methods of achieving them (instrumental values) as "Good breeding", "Sensitiveness", "Responsibility", "Self-control" and "Cheerfulness". Low values are "Effectiveness in business", "Sincerity", "Open-minded", "High demands" and "Intolerance to own and others drawbacks".

The fifth type of combatants is the next most widespread (15.30%). The most significant terminal values for this type of combatants are "Active life" and "Life wisdom". Important values also include "Interesting job", "Health (physical and mental)" and "Love". The least significant terminal values are "Cognition", "Creativity", "Faithful friends", "Freedom", "Public mission", "Happy family life" and "Entertainment". Military men of the fifth type prefer such instrumental values as "Carefulness", "Tolerance" and "Cheerfulness". Representatives of this type have the lowest ranks according to such instrumental values as "Courage in defending their own views", "Independence", "Open-minded", "Honesty (sincerity)", "Sensitivity" and "Efficiency in business".

Combatants of the fourth type (4.37%) are in third place in terms of prevalence. They prefer such terminal values as "Interesting job", "Financially secure life" and "Love". High ranks also have "Public mission", "The beauty of nature and art" and "Faithful friends". The least significant terminal values for this type of combatants are "Freedom", "Creativity", "Cognition", "Productive life" and "Development". Among the instrumental values, the preference is given to "Self-control" and "Discipline".

“Cheerfulness”, “Independence” and “Education” are also highly rated. The lowest ranks were received by the instrumental values: “Sensitivity”, “Honesty (sincerity)”, “Firm will” and “Effectiveness in business”.

Table 1: Typology of individual values of combatants (in points).

Indicators	Type 1 (n = 2.19%)	Type 2 (n = 74.32%)	Type 3 (n = 3.82%)	Type 4 (n = 4.37%)	Type 5 (n = 15.30%)
	M±SD	M±SD	M±SD	M±SD	M±SD
<i>Terminal values</i>					
Active life	3.75±4.19	7.60±4.60	11.71±3.15	8.88±4.82	4.93±4.29
Life wisdom	10.00±5.29	7.38±3.98	14.29±3.73	9.00±5.81	5.71±3.89
Health (physical and mental)	14.75±2.87	3.73±3.79	11.43±4.12	10.25±7.81	6.68±5.09
Interesting job	5.25±3.77	8.96±4.91	14.57±3.10	4.00±5.76	6.68±4.50
The beauty of nature and art	12.00±6.93	12.68±5.18	13.29±1.98	6.75±4.33	9.61±4.47
Love	13.75±5.85	5.94±4.66	13.43±2.37	5.75±3.41	7.14±5.01
Financially secure life	13.25±4.27	6.51±4.62	12.71±5.62	4.25±1.91	8.32±5.93
Faithful friends	10.00±5.72	7.07±3.81	4.14±3.63	7.38±4.27	11.54±4.96
Public mission	11.50±2.08	9.49±3.79	4.71±4.31	6.50±4.14	11.64±3.83
Cognition	10.00±4.55	11.73±4.04	6.14±3.29	12.25±4.95	11.07±4.20
Productive life	9.25±5.56	11.04±3.67	4.14±4.41	13.88±3.04	10.96±4.22
Development	7.25±4.92	9.71±4.03	7.29±4.72	14.13±4.02	9.96±4.56
Entertainment	9.75±5.62	13.46±3.56	10.00±4.62	9.38±5.21	11.79±4.78
Freedom	5.25±1.71	11.37±4.03	4.14±3.67	11.88±3.83	11.61±4.65
Happy family life	9.75±4.92	5.96±4.96	8.29±4.15	9.50±4.60	11.64±5.54
Happiness of others	4.75±2.22	12.81±4.44	9.71±4.79	10.63±4.24	13.04±4.13
Creativity	10.00±5.94	15.28±3.05	9.71±5.65	11.88±4.49	11.29±4.39
Self-confidence	10.50±6.24	10.03±4.67	11.14±4.41	11.25±3.69	8.46±4.53
<i>Instrumental values</i>					
Carefulness	14.75±2.87	6.86±5.32	3.14±3.13	10.38±5.55	4.39±2.94
Good breeding	12.75±2.99	6.67±5.02	5.00±3.37	8.75±6.48	8.50±5.51
High demands	9.75±6.95	13.10±5.07	5.57±3.69	7.38±5.24	8.29±4.65
Cheerfulness	12.25±5.12	7.67±4.66	8.14±4.22	6.13±2.80	7.14±4.15
Discipline	13.25±7.54	8.35±4.72	10.29±4.86	5.25±3.92	9.39±4.80
Independence	8.25±7.85	9.08±4.82	6.14±3.34	6.13±3.94	10.54±4.49
Intolerance to own and others drawbacks	8.00±5.77	13.63±4.20	11.00±5.57	7.63±4.10	9.46±6.29
Education	9.00±5.03	8.87±4.81	8.00±4.55	6.50±3.66	8.68±4.56
Responsibility	15.75±1.50	7.20±4.41	11.43±4.16	9.38±4.44	9.14±4.86
Rationalism	14.00±2.16	9.24±4.44	5.00±3.00	7.13±4.61	8.39±4.33
Self-control	10.25±5.12	7.35±4.45	12.29±3.77	4.88±2.90	8.71±4.77
Courage in defending own views	6.75±3.10	9.74±4.23	11.29±4.96	11.38±5.18	10.32±3.87
Firm will	7.25±3.20	8.89±4.49	12.29±5.94	14.25±2.71	8.54±4.94
Tolerance	5.50±0.58	9.71±4.43	12.00±4.00	11.38±4.03	6.00±4.21
Open-minded	6.00±2.45	12.16±4.57	10.71±5.35	11.50±3.93	11.64±4.44

Indicators	Type 1 (n = 2.19%)	Type 2 (n = 74.32%)	Type 3 (n = 3.82%)	Type 4 (n = 4.37%)	Type 5 (n = 15.30%)
	M±SD	M±SD	M±SD	M±SD	M±SD
Honesty (sincerity)	3.25±3.30	9.50±5.69	12.57±3.60	14.25±2.25	12.39±5.34
Efficiency in business	6.00±4.24	11.29±4.94	10.86±5.98	15.38±2.50	14.79±3.68
Responsiveness	5.75±4.92	11.51±5.14	13.29±4.27	14.00±3.42	13.50±4.27
<i>Features of the mental status of combatants</i>					
PTSD	106.00±20.05	107.43±17.76	109.43±18.20	124.25±18.38	143.64±15.77
ASD	100.50±21.06	98.55±17.99	95.57±19.24	116.75±18.59	138.36±16.94
Depression	35.25±6.85	39.65±5.28	40.43±3.41	42.63±6.09	49.39±6.06

In the structure of terminal values of the third type (3.82%) preference is given to such values as "Faithful friends", "Freedom", "Productive life", "Public mission". However, they rate low the importance of such values as "Self-confidence", "Health (physical and mental)", "Active life", "Financially secure life", "Beauty of nature and art", "Love", "Life wisdom" and "Interesting job". Among the instrumental values, representatives of this type distinguish "Carefulness", "Rationalism", "Good breeding", "High demands" and "Independence". Low positions in the hierarchy of instrumental values have "Courage in defending own views", "Responsibility", "Tolerance", "Self-control", "Firm will", "Honesty (sincerity)" and "Sensitivity".

The least widespread type was identified (2.19%) of combatants, for whom the most significant terminal values are "Active life", "Happiness of others", "Freedom", "Interesting job" and "Development". For them, "Public mission", "Beauty of nature and art", "Financially secure life", "Love" and "Health (physical and mental)" are of little significance. To achieve them, combatants of this type consider it important for themselves to use such instrumental values as "Honesty", "Tolerance", "Sensitivity", "Open-minded", "Efficiency in business", "Courage in defending own views" and "Firm will". Combatants of this type have the lowest indicators for such instrumental values as "Cheerfulness", "Good breeding", "Discipline", "Rationalism", "Carefulness" and "Responsibility".

As can be seen from the table, in the NSU servicemen of the first, second and third types of the value sphere, the indicators of depression, ASD, and PTSD practically coincide and indicate the absence or insignificant manifestation of symptoms described using these scales. Combatants of the fourth type of value sphere differ from the first three in higher ASD indicators. This gives grounds to assume the formation of their individual symptoms of post-traumatic stress. In terms of depression and PTSD, the fourth type of combatants occupies an intermediate position between the

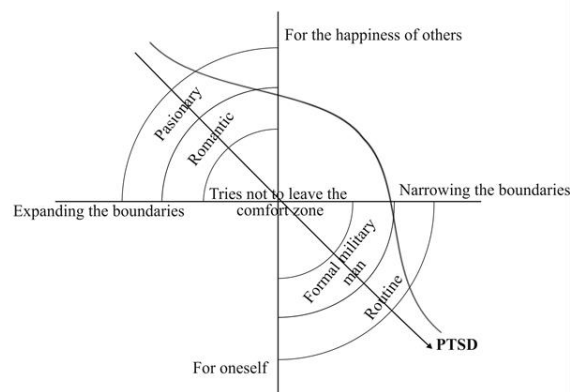
first three and the fifth type of value sphere of combatants. The fifth type of combatant has higher rates of depression, ASD, and PTSD than the rest. With such indicators, it is possible to predict a high probability of the onset (development) of PTSD of the fifth type of combatants.

The five types of the value sphere of the combatants' personality that we have identified can be placed between the two axes of the Schwartz [34] model:

- "common goal of life", which has poles "for the happiness of others" – "for oneself" (it also includes "for the sake of one's social/professional group", "reference group", "family", etc.), or "transcendence – individualism";
- "a way to achieve a goal", which has poles "the use of social norms to expand boundaries" – "the use of social norms to narrow the boundaries".

The ratio of the types of the value sphere of the personality and the vector of the development of PTSD in combatants is shown in the Figure 1.

Figure 1: Correlation between the types of values and the vector of development of PTSD of the NGU combatants.



In the Figure, the axes are set by the directions of the development of the value sphere of the individual. The PTSD vector indicates the direction in which the PTSD indicators increase (from the absence of symptoms to the formation of a posttraumatic symptom complex with clinical manifestations). The curve above it schematically describes the frequency of the corresponding PTSD indicators in the sample of combatants.

DISCUSSION

The most widespread type of value sphere, identified in 74.32% of NGU combatants, we designated it as "The one who doesn't leave the comfort zone". Military personnel of this type strive for a balanced, comfortable, prosperous life, observing for this the norms and methods of interaction with the outside world, accepted in society. They do not place high demands on themselves and their lives. Thus, in a study by Prykhodko et al. [7] it was proved that compliance with the norms of society, conflict-free interpersonal interaction is an important component of the psychological safety of a person. Confirmation of the obtained results is the conclusions of researchers that resourcefulness (strategies of conservation, avoidance, procrastination) [35] and satisfaction of spiritual needs (Spiritual Needs), in particular, religion [36] are a preventive factor in the development of PTSD.

The "routine" personality type, identified in 15.30% of combatants, is characterized as a person who constantly works to improve his/her own life but does not feel happiness and pleasure from it. This structure of the value sphere describes military men who believe that life is a hard routine, daily work. They are not convinced that life should necessarily be happy and that work should be interesting, aimed at something important. According to McAllister, Callaghan, & Fellin [37], such military personnel adheres to generally accepted norms of interaction to avoid conflict and other problems. They limit themselves in emotional manifestations. Fulfillment of tasks in combat conditions does not leave the room to react to stress, provokes in them the development of depressive manifestations, and in the future, PTSD.

The structure of the value sphere of the personality of combatants of the fourth type (found in 4.37%) can be described as "Formal military men". They are narrowly focused on their profession as a means of satisfying material needs. Moreover, their professional identification does not reach the level of mastery, stopping at the level of the performer. The profession of a military man is not perceived by them as contributing to self-development, knowledge, creativity, and richness of life. According to Johansen,

Laberg, & Martinussen [38], such features of the professionalization of military men determine the leading role of self-control and discipline in the structure of instrumental values and explain in it the low importance of result orientation. With such identification, the external form of the soldier's actions is copied, but not the meaning of the profession, its mission. The limitations and lack of freedom that characterize the identification of the "performer" level make the military men vulnerable to the occurrence of ASD and increase the development of depression and PTSD.

Military men of the third type (3.82%) can be characterized as "Romantics". They are focused on the close social environment, strive to be significant for society, share their values, and are able to refuse from comfort, love, health, and their favorite profession for the sake of public recognition. According to Jones & Wessely [39] and Noy [40], this personal value structure contains the well-known potential for coping with combat stress: using the help of peers, mutual understanding, and trust of combat brothers.

The least common (2.19%) identified is the first type of personality of combatants, which is called "Passionary". Its feature is an active struggle for the happiness of others, the expansion of the boundaries of existing norms. For this, they are ready to refuse from a comfortable, safe life and their own interests. Military personnel of this type is free in their thoughts and actions. They are sincere, sensitive, tolerant, aimed at achieving a result, but they neglect restrictions and conventions. According to Banducci, Connolly, Vujanovic, Alvarez, & Bonn-Miller [41], a person's high tolerance to stress, perceived or actual ability to tolerate negative emotional or physical states are back proportional to the symptoms of PTSD. Research by Bandura [42] and Schwarzer [43] has shown that motivated people are better able to cope with problems and solve new, more complex problems. Military men of this type can often find themselves in stressful situations, sometimes they create them by themselves. However, this does not lead to the development of symptoms of depression or PTSD in the future.

Thus, the research confirmed our hypothesis 1 about the possibility of typing the individual values of combatants, taking into account the indicators of acute stress disorder (ASD), depression, and PTSD.

An analysis of the results of the correlation between the types of values and the vector of development of PTSD of combatants (see the Figure) showed that belonging to such types of personal value spheres as "Routine" and "Formal military men", which imply a narrowing of the goal and the method of achieving it, significantly reduces the ability of

military men to resist combat stress, and increases the possibility of the formation of a symptom complex of PTSD. At the same time, the interiorizing of values, which involve expanding the range of ways to achieve the goal, going beyond the personal interests inherent of combatants of such types as "Passionary" and "Romantic", is the prevention of the development of PTSD. These military personnel will be potentially more resistant to combat stress.

At the same time, attention is drawn to the fact that the absolute majority of NGU combatants (74.32%) belong to the type "The one who does not leave the comfort zone". These military men are in an equidistant position from opposite poles of the circumplex of values and the vector of PTSD development. Therefore, it can be assumed that some of them will be more resistant to the effects of combat stress, taking into account their individual psychological characteristics (good psychological resilience, adaptation to extreme situations, etc.). The other part will be more susceptible to stress and the occurrence of psychogenic disorders. In general, the identified problem of studying the value sphere of combatants, in our opinion, is relevant and requires in-depth research.

The results of our research support hypothesis 2 partially. Based only on belonging to a certain type of personal value sphere, it is impossible to predict with a high degree of probability the risk of development and the severity of behavioral and clinical manifestations of an acute reaction to stress, susceptibility to depression, and other mental disorders, including PTSD.

CONCLUSIONS

Values determine the life goals of a person and how to

achieve them. The individual values of combatants perform an important adaptive and protective function under conditions of combat stress. Understanding of them enables military mental health professionals to create an effective system of COSC for military men.

As a result of the research, a typology of the value sphere of combatants has been developed, consisting of five types: "Passionary", "The one who does not leave the comfort zone", "Romantic", "Formal serviceman", "Routine". The most resistant to combat stress are military men who are aimed at internalizing value orientations, expanding the boundaries of existing norms, striving to be significant for society and are able to refuse from comfort, love, health, and their favorite profession for the sake of public recognition ("Passionary" (2.19%), "Romantic" (3.82%)). The most vulnerable to combat stress and the occurrence of PTSD are combatants belonging to the "Routine" (15.30%) and "Formal soldier" (4.37%) types. For the Ukrainian combatants of the "The one who does not leave the comfort zone" type (74.32%), safety and stable well-to-do life are the main priorities.

Ethical standards and informed consent

All procedures followed were in accordance with the ethical standards of the responsible committee on human experimentation (institutional and national) and with the Helsinki Declaration of 1975, as revised in 2000. Informed consent was obtained from all subjects for inclusion in the study while maintaining their confidentiality.

Disclaimer

No conflict of interest to declare. No financial support was received from any governmental institution, economic or non-governmental organization. No personal information was collected through the survey, the anonymity was preserved for all the respondents.

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