

PSYCHOLOGICAL DIFFICULTIES AND RESOURCES FOR ADAPTATION AMONG INTERNALLY DISPLACED PERSONS IN A NEW SOCIAL ENVIRONMENT

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The article presents the results of an empirical study of psychological difficulties and resources for adaptation among internally displaced persons in a new social environment. The study aimed to identify socio-psychological adaptation, traumatic stress symptoms, selected resilience-related indicators, and perceived social support among internally displaced persons. The sample comprised 54 respondents aged 22–41 residing in a temporary accommodation facility in Cherkasy, Ukraine. The research instruments included the Rogers–Dymond Socio-Psychological Adaptation Questionnaire, the Impact of Event Scale–Revised (IES-R), four selected items from the 10-item Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10), and the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS).

Low and medium levels of socio-psychological adaptation were prevalent among the participants. The most pronounced difficulties included emotional discomfort, reduced internality, avoidance, and hyperarousal. A considerable proportion of respondents demonstrated medium or high levels of intrusion, avoidance, and hyperarousal related to traumatic experiences. At the same time, adaptation resources were identified, including the perceived ability to adjust to change, cope with difficult circumstances and stress, and rely on family support. Support from friends and significant others was less pronounced.

The findings indicate that the adaptation of internally displaced persons is heterogeneous and combines psychological vulnerability with preserved personal and social resources. Psychological assistance should therefore be differentiated and focused on reducing traumatic stress, strengthening emotional self-regulation and perceived control, and expanding social support networks. Further research should examine relationships among adaptation, traumatic stress, resilience assessed using the standard CD-RISC-10 total score, and social support using inferential statistical methods.

Keywords: internally displaced persons, socio-psychological adaptation, traumatic stress, resilience, social support, emotional self-regulation.

Репкіна Н. В., Товстуха О. М., Міщенко А. О. Психологічні труднощі та ресурси адаптації внутрішньо переміщених осіб у новому соціальному середовищі

У статті представлено результати емпіричного дослідження психологічних труднощів і ресурсів адаптації внутрішньо переміщених осіб у новому соціальному середовищі. Метою дослідження є визначення особливостей соціально-психологічної адаптації, проявів травматичного стресу, життєстійкості та сприйнятої соціальної підтримки внутрішньо переміщених осіб. У дослідженні взяли участь 54 респонденти віком від 22 до 41 року, які проживали в закладі тимчасового розміщення для ВПО у місті Черкаси. Використано опитувальник соціально-психологічної адаптації К. Роджерса і Р. Даймонд, шкалу впливу травматичної події IES-R, чотири окремі пункти короткої версії шкали життєстійкості Коннора–Девідсона CD-RISC-10 та багатовимірну шкалу сприйнятої соціальної підтримки MSPSS. Отримані дані аналізували на описовому рівні.

Установлено, що серед учасників переважали низький і середній рівні соціально-психологічної адаптації. Найбільш вираженими труднощами були емоційний дискомфорт, знижена інтернальність,

уникнення та підвищена збудливість. Значна частина респондентів мала середні або високі показники вторгнення, уникнення та підвищеної збудливості, пов'язаних з травматичними переживаннями. Водночас аналіз окремих пунктів CD-RISC-10 виявив збережену здатність частини учасників пристосовуватися до змін, справлятися зі складними обставинами та стресом. Найбільш вираженим соціальним ресурсом була підтримка сім'ї, тоді як підтримка друзів і значущих інших була менш доступною.

Результати свідчать про неоднорідність адаптації ВПО та необхідність ефективного диференційованого психологічного супроводу, спрямованого на зниження травматичного стресу, розвиток емоційної саморегуляції, посилення суб'єктивного контролю й розширення мереж соціальної підтримки.

Ключові слова: внутрішньо переміщені особи, соціально-психологічна адаптація, травматичний стрес, життєстійкість, соціальна підтримка, емоційна саморегуляція.

Introduction. Forced internal displacement is a complex life situation accompanied by the loss of a familiar environment, the disruption of social ties, changes in occupational and family roles, financial and practical difficulties, and uncertainty about the future. During wartime, displacement often occurs suddenly and under an immediate threat to life and safety. Therefore, the adaptation of internally displaced persons to a new social environment is not limited to arranging everyday living conditions or formally participating in the life of the host community. It encompasses emotional, cognitive, behavioral, and interpersonal domains and involves the gradual restoration of a sense of safety, perceived control, and social belonging [1, p. 73–76; 3, p. 48–59; 4, p. 56–61].

Psychological adaptation is regarded as a dynamic process of interaction between the individual and the environment. It involves not only adjustment to new conditions but also the restructuring of behavioral patterns, social relationships, and life strategies. For internally displaced persons, this process is complicated by the fact that the need to integrate into a new community is often combined with the consequences of traumatic experiences, chronic stress, the loss of familiar social contacts, and the limited predictability of future life circumstances [1, p. 73–76; 2, p. 118–123; 6].

Contemporary studies devote considerable attention to such psychological consequences of forced displacement as emotional tension, anxiety, traumatic stress symptoms, experiences of loss, helplessness, and social isolation [3, p. 48–59; 4, p. 56–61; 6]. At the same time, adaptation depends not only on the severity of psychological difficulties but also on

the personal and social resources available to the individual. These resources include resilience, the ability to cope with change, emotional self-regulation, support from family members, friends, and significant others, active coping strategies, and a willingness to establish new social ties [7; 9, p. 573–599].

An exclusive focus on the negative consequences of displacement may create an oversimplified view of internally displaced persons as a homogeneous and predominantly maladapted group. In reality, traumatic experiences may coexist with a preserved ability to solve everyday problems, maintain interpersonal relationships, and gradually restore active engagement in life. Therefore, the psychological adaptation of internally displaced persons should be understood as a complex and heterogeneous combination of difficulties and resources [7; 9, p. 573–599].

Despite the considerable number of existing studies, insufficient attention has been paid to how traumatic stress symptoms, difficulties in socio-psychological adaptation, resilience, and perceived social support are combined within the adaptation process of internally displaced persons [2, p. 118–123; 3, p. 48–59; 4, p. 56–61; 6; 7]. A comprehensive analysis of these indicators makes it possible to identify the most vulnerable and relatively preserved components of the adaptation process and to specify the principal directions of psychological support for internally displaced persons.

The aim of the study was to identify the psychological difficulties and resources for adaptation among internally displaced persons in a new social environment by analyzing indicators of socio-psychological adaptation, the psychological impact

of traumatic events, selected resilience-related item indicators, and perceived social support. *rt.*

Research methods and instruments.

The study involved 54 internally displaced persons aged 22–41 years who were residing in a temporary accommodation facility for internally displaced persons in Cherkasy at the time of the survey. The inclusion criteria were officially recognized internally displaced person status, adulthood, sufficient proficiency in Ukrainian, the absence of pronounced cognitive impairment, and voluntary informed consent to participate.

Empirical data were collected using Google Forms, which ensured the standardized administration of the psychodiagnostics instruments to all participants. The following instruments were used: the Rogers–Dymond Socio-Psychological Adaptation Questionnaire; the Ukrainian version of the Impact of Event Scale–Revised (IES-R); four selected items from the Ukrainian version of the 10-item Connor–Davidson Resilience Scale (CD-RISC-10) [8]; and the Ukrainian version of the Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support (MSPSS) [5].

The analysis of the CD-RISC-10 focused on four selected item-level indicators reflect-

ing the perceived ability to adapt to change, cope with whatever happens, cope with stress, and cope with unpleasant feelings such as anger, pain, and sadness. These indicators were analyzed separately and were not interpreted as standard subscales of the CD-RISC-10.

For descriptive presentation, the original categories were consolidated into three levels: very low and low scores were combined as low, medium scores were retained as medium, and high and very high scores were combined as high. Data processing involved calculating the number and percentage of participants with low, medium, and high levels of the indicators under study. The distributions obtained using the four instruments were compared descriptively to identify the most pronounced psychological difficulties and resources for adaptation among internally displaced persons. No causal relationships or statistically significant differences between groups were assessed.

Results. The findings demonstrated the heterogeneous nature of psychological adaptation among internally displaced persons. Pronounced emotional and adaptation-related difficulties coexisted with relatively preserved personal and social resources.

Table 1

Distribution of participants by levels of the main psychological indicators, %

Indicator	Low level	Medium level	High level
Overall socio-psychological adaptation	40.7	40.7	18.5
Self-acceptance	37.0	48.1	15.0
Acceptance of others	16.7	42.6	40.7
Emotional comfort	46.3	27.8	25.9
Internality	44.4	42.6	13.0
Escapism	22.0	40.7	37.0
Intrusion	20.4	44.4	35.2
Avoidance	19.0	40.7	40.7
Hyperarousal	24.1	33.3	42.6
Selected CD-RISC-10 item: ability to adapt to change	18.5	44.4	37.1
Selected CD-RISC-10 item: ability to cope with whatever happens	22.0	35.2	42.6
Selected CD-RISC-10 item: ability to cope with stress	27.8	40.7	31.5
Selected CD-RISC-10 item: ability to cope with unpleasant feelings	35.0	40.7	24.1
Family support	18.5	35.2	46.3
Support from friends	33.3	42.6	24.1
Support from significant others	27.8	44.4	27.8

Note: percentages may not total 100.0 because of rounding. The four CD-RISC-10 indicators presented in the table are selected item-level indicators and should not be interpreted as standard subscales of the instrument.

According to the overall indicator of socio-psychological adaptation, low and medium levels were each found in 40.7% of the participants, whereas only 18.5% demonstrated a high level. Thus, most participants demonstrated low or medium levels of adjustment to the new social environment.

Emotional comfort and internality were the most vulnerable components of adaptation. A low level of emotional comfort was recorded in 46.3% of the participants, indicating the prevalence of internal tension, anxiety, and psychological discomfort. Low internality was found in 44.4% of the participants, whereas only 13.0% demonstrated a high level. This may reflect a sense of limited control over one's life under circumstances in which many events depend on external conditions. At the same time, low internality should not be interpreted unequivocally as passivity, as it may partly reflect a realistic awareness of the limited controllability of wartime circumstances and forced displacement.

Self-acceptance indicators were also predominantly medium or low. A high level of self-acceptance was found in only 15.0% of the participants. By contrast, acceptance of others appeared to be a relatively preserved component: 40.7% demonstrated a high level, whereas only 16.7% had a low level. Therefore, difficulties in adaptation were not accompanied by a complete loss of the ability to interact socially and establish relationships with other people.

A high level of escapism was recorded in 37.0% of the participants, while 40.7% demonstrated a medium level. Avoidance of problems may temporarily reduce emotional tension; however, when used over a prolonged period, it may hinder active problem-solving and integration into the new environment.

The results of the Impact of Event Scale-Revised indicated a considerable level of trauma-related psychological distress within the study group. A high level of intrusion, involving the involuntary recurrence of traumatic memories, thoughts, and images, was found in 35.2% of the participants. High levels of avoidance and hyperarousal were recorded in 40.7% and 42.6% of the participants, respectively. The combination of intrusion, avoidance, and hyperarousal may indicate difficulties in pro-

cessing traumatic experiences: unwanted memories and intense emotional reactions may alternate with attempts to distance oneself from them.

At the same time, the selected item-level indicators from the CD-RISC-10 suggested the presence of important perceived coping resources. A high level of the perceived ability to cope with whatever happens was identified in 42.6% of the participants, while 37.1% demonstrated a high level of the perceived ability to adapt to change. Despite the presence of traumatic stress symptoms, a considerable proportion of the participants therefore retained a perceived ability to respond to change, address everyday problems, and act within the limits of available opportunities.

The indicator related to the regulation of unpleasant feelings was less favorable. A low level of the perceived ability to cope with feelings such as anger, pain, and sadness was found in 35.0% of the participants, whereas only 24.1% demonstrated a high level. This finding is consistent with the reduced emotional comfort and pronounced hyperarousal identified in the study. Thus, among some participants, the practical ability to respond to changing circumstances appeared to be better preserved than the ability to regulate intense negative emotional experiences.

Family support was an important social resource for adaptation. A high level of perceived family support was reported by 46.3% of the participants, whereas only 18.5% demonstrated a low level. For a considerable proportion of internally displaced persons, the family therefore remained an important source of emotional stability, acceptance, and practical assistance.

Support from friends was less available: 33.3% of the participants reported a low level, whereas only 24.1% demonstrated a high level. This may reflect the loss of previous social networks, geographical separation from friends, and difficulties in establishing new relationships based on trust. Perceived support from significant others was at a medium level for most participants.

A descriptive comparison of the findings obtained using the four instruments showed that the adaptation of internally displaced persons cannot be characterized solely as maladaptation

or, conversely, as successful adjustment. Within the study group, high levels of traumatic stress symptoms, emotional discomfort, and reduced perceived control coexisted with relatively preserved acceptance of others, perceived coping capacities, and access to family support.

The most vulnerable components of adaptation were emotional stability, the subjective sense of control, the processing of traumatic experiences, and the restoration of social relationships with friends. The principal resources included family support, a preserved capacity for social interaction, and perceived abilities to cope with change and difficult circumstances. The findings are descriptive and characterize only the group examined; they do not provide grounds for establishing causal relationships between forced displacement and specific psychological indicators.

Conclusions. The psychological adaptation of internally displaced persons to a new social environment was found to be heterogeneous and frequently accompanied by considerable difficulties. Most participants demonstrated low or medium levels of overall socio-psychological adaptation, combined with reduced emotional comfort, a limited sense of control over life events, and a tendency to avoid difficult situations.

The considerable psychological burden experienced by the participants was confirmed by the indicators of the psychological impact of traumatic events. A substantial proportion of the participants demonstrated medium or high levels of intrusion, avoidance, and hyperarousal. The most vulnerable components of adaptation were emotional stability, internal-ity, and the perceived ability to cope with intense unpleasant feelings.

At the same time, important personal and social resources remained available within the study group. The selected item-level indicators from the CD-RISC-10 showed that a considerable proportion of the participants perceived

themselves as able to adapt to change, cope with difficult circumstances, and manage stress. Acceptance of others and the capacity to maintain social interaction were also relatively preserved. Family support was the most pronounced social resource, whereas support from friends was less available, which may be associated with the loss of previous social networks, geographical separation, and difficulties in establishing new relationships based on trust.

Thus, the adaptation of internally displaced persons cannot be characterized exclusively as either maladaptation or successful adjustment. It represents a complex combination of traumatic stress symptoms, emotional and social difficulties, relatively preserved perceived coping capacities, and available social support resources.

The practical significance of the findings lies in identifying the principal directions of psychological support for internally displaced persons. Such support should focus on stabilizing emotional states, developing emotional self-regulation skills, strengthening perceived control within the limits of realistically available actions, facilitating the psychological processing of traumatic experiences, and expanding social support networks beyond the family.

Further research should examine the relationships among traumatic stress, resilience, perceived social support, and socio-psychological adaptation using inferential statistical methods. It should also compare different groups of internally displaced persons according to the duration of displacement, living conditions, age, and the nature of their wartime experiences. Future studies should additionally assess the CD-RISC-10 using its standard total score and examine selected item-level indicators only as supplementary descriptive data.

Information on the use of Artificial Intelligence. It was used exclusively for stylistic editing of individual English-language text passages and for checking grammar.

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