

**Nazar Protsyk\***

Postgraduate Student  
Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University  
46027, 2 Maksyma Kryvonosa Str., Ternopil, Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4779-6785>

**Nataliya Savelyuk**

Doctor of Psychology, Professor  
Ternopil Volodymyr Hnatiuk National Pedagogical University  
46027, 2 Maksyma Kryvonosa Str., Ternopil, Ukraine  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5246-9677>

## Personal predictors of psycho-emotional adaptation in children of combatants

**Article's History:**

Received: 20.06.2025  
Revised: 13.11.2025  
Accepted: 15.12.2025  
Published: 12.01.2026

**Suggested Citation:**

Protsyk, N., & Savelyuk, N. (2025). Personal predictors of psycho-emotional adaptation in children of combatants. *Scientific Bulletin of Mukachevo State University. Series "Pedagogy and Psychology"*, 11(4), 78-89. doi: 10.52534/msu-pp4.2025.78.

**Abstract.** The study aimed to conceptually substantiate the peculiarities of the mutual influence of psycho-emotional processes and states of children and parents participating in hostilities. A theoretical and analytical approach was used in the study, employing content analysis of empirical and monitoring sources. The theoretical review showed that the prolonged exposure of children to war was accompanied by the spread of clinically significant stress reactions, in particular, increased levels of anxiety, depression and emotional regulation disorders. A summary of international monitoring data showed that the population of Ukraine reported moderate to severe levels of anxiety and symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which created an unfavourable psycho-emotional environment for families with children. A review of the literature also demonstrated a significant impact of parents' psychological state on children's emotional functioning: symptoms of PTSD, hyperarousal and depressive manifestations in adults led to reduced emotional availability, impaired family interaction and increased risk of secondary traumatisation. The study established that the key predictors of adaptation were the level of resilience, types of coping strategies, and the nature of the locus of control. The study concluded that supporting children's psychological resilience required comprehensive family-oriented interventions and systematic management of parental stress responses. The results obtained can be used by practical psychologists, social workers, educational institutions and health care professionals to develop targeted programmes to support the psycho-emotional stability of children and families affected by military action

\*Corresponding author

**Keywords:** resilience; coping strategies; support; stress; protective factors

## INTRODUCTION

The research relevance is determined by the growing number of children whose parents are directly involved in combat operations, and therefore, the systemic impact of combat stress and psychotraumatic experiences of adults on the psycho-emotional development of schoolchildren. The psychological consequences of combat experience, in particular post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depressive symptoms, increased anxiety, impulsivity, emotional exhaustion, and possible substance abuse, are key predictors of transgenerational transmission of traumatic experiences. They cause children to develop increased anxiety,

emotional instability, hyperactivity, and a tendency toward maladaptive behaviour patterns. The impact of these conditions significantly changes the quality of family interaction and determines which emotional and cognitive strategies the child masters, their style of responding to stress, level of self-regulation, locus of control, and overall ability to adapt psychologically and emotionally. Family systems where one parent has combat trauma are often characterised by emotional distance, inconsistent rules, reduced emotional availability, or increased conflict. This creates an environment in which children do not receive sufficient confirmation of



safety and predictability, which is critical for the formation of adaptive coping mechanisms. In such conditions, the child's personal and psychological characteristics, namely the level of internal/external locus of control, self-esteem, emotional regulation, and tolerance to frustration, become decisive determinants of how they will respond to stressful events. Without proper attention to these predictors, there is an increased risk of developing chronic anxiety, depressive tendencies, somatisation, behavioural problems and difficulties in social adaptation, which can later develop into persistent mental health disorders.

Various researchers have addressed the issue of the influence of individual psychological determinants on emotional adaptation processes in children, emphasising the multifactorial nature of this phenomenon and its sensitivity to specific developmental conditions. The study by T. Collins & D. Tam (2024) analysed the difficulties faced by families of children whose parents were in military service. The study described in detail the situations that complicated the emotional functioning of children, in particular the increased tension resulting from the instability of family life and the fragmentation of familiar social ties. The study emphasised factors caused by prolonged separations, the unpredictable nature of military service, and the increased emotional stress that developed in the family environment and affected children's experiences and coping mechanisms. The structure of parenting practices in military families and their relationship with indicators of child adaptation were studied by S.-K. Lee *et al.* (2024). The study identified several differentiated parenting profiles, which were associated with varying degrees of parental sensitivity and demandingness. The study traced how changes in parenting approaches correlated with children's behavioural, emotional and social responses, emphasising the dynamism of adaptation processes in the context of family role transformations. The results showed that the variability of children's adaptation largely depended on the flexibility of parental strategies and their ability to maintain emotional balance during periods of increased uncertainty. The socio-psychological challenges faced by young people during the war were the subject of a study by O. Shpor-tun *et al.* (2025). The researchers identified a wide range of factors that determined the choice of adaptive and maladaptive coping strategies, including the intensity of stress experienced, the availability of social support, the level of subjective control, and the specifics of social interaction in crisis conditions. The study summarised the possibilities of psychological support that contributed to reducing the negative effects of stress and strengthening the individual's resources for constructive adaptation. The results emphasised the importance of timely intervention and the development of comprehensive support programmes for children and young people who are in a state of prolonged psychosocial stress.

M. Keleynikov *et al.* (2025) determined that during wartime, a higher number of PTSD symptoms in parents is associated with more serious behavioural and emotional

difficulties in children. At the same time, they found that adaptive strategies of interpersonal emotion regulation used by parents (e.g., emotion acceptance, problem solving, reappraisal) significantly mitigate this negative association. A study by A. Mahar *et al.* (2023) determined that adolescents whose parents serve or have served in the military had poorer mental health and lower life satisfaction compared to adolescents from families with no military connection. They also reported more emotional problems, a constant feeling of hopelessness, and frequent risky behaviour. The authors concluded that adolescents in military families need additional mental health support. The risks of maladaptive coping strategies among military-related adolescents were analysed by T. Gilreath *et al.* (2022). The study summarised combinations of factors that predicted the probability of maladaptive behaviour. The study identified patterns of risk combinations that influenced the formation of ineffective stress coping strategies. R. Kirkham *et al.* (2025) summarised scientific approaches to understanding emotional regulation and coping among military personnel. The study systematised the dominant models of emotional response, characteristic forms of regulatory behaviour, and protective factors associated with difficult adaptation. As a result, general patterns of emotional functioning in military groups were identified. The psycho-emotional difficulties of participants in the educational process under martial law were also studied by B. Palamar *et al.* (2023). The study described changes in emotional stability, academic motivation, and behavioural responses. The study identified protective factors that influenced the effectiveness of overcoming psycho-emotional stress in different groups of participants in the educational environment.

Y. Omelchenko (2022) studied the specifics of providing psychological assistance to children in wartime conditions. The study outlined the main areas of work with children affected by hostilities. The study described the typical difficulties that specialists responded to and the characteristics of children's emotional reactions in crises. L. Pomytina *et al.* (2021) analysed the psychological determinants of the formation of personal identity in older preschoolers. The study described the key personality characteristics associated with the development of identity structures in preschool-age children. The study identified predictors that influenced the variability of a child's individual development. The above-mentioned studies revealed gaps related to insufficient systematisation of personality psychological factors of adaptation of children of combatants, a limited amount of empirical data on the interaction of family and internal factors, and a lack of models that would combine the individual emotional characteristics of the child with the influence of the military experience of the parents. The study aimed to theoretically substantiate and determine the influence of the mechanisms of interaction between the personal resources of the child and the psychological state of combatant parents. The objectives of the study were to conduct a theoretical analysis of the psychological consequences of war for Ukrainian children and parents; to

determine the relationships between the psychological state of parents who are combatants, the characteristics of family dynamics, and the individual adaptive resources of children; to develop a theoretical model of the psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants, strengthening their resilience and developing effective coping strategies.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study was based on analytical and systematic approaches to the study of crisis psychology and family dynamics. The study was defined as theoretical, with an emphasis on systematic analysis of scientific sources, international and local statistical data, and its time frame covers the last four years (2020-2024), including the active phase of hostilities on the territory of Ukraine and their systemic impact on the psychological state of children and parents. Data collection was based on theoretical analysis methods, which ensured the comprehension of scientific sources. The results of psychological and psychiatric studies, reports from international organisations (UNICEF, 2025; World Health Organisation, 2025; Childhood disrupted, n.d.), analytical data (International Organisation for Migration, 2024) on children's mental health, and studies highlighting the impact of war on the family system were analysed. Furthermore, sources describing the individual psychological resources of children (resilience, coping strategies, locus of control), the psychological state of parents who have participated in combat operations (PTSD, emotional burnout, transgenerational trauma) and the mechanisms of family transmission of traumatic experiences were also addressed (Goto *et al.*, 2024; Naeem *et al.*, 2025; Nalyvaiko *et al.*, 2025). A theoretical analysis of data on crisis psychology, developmental traumatology, family stress theories, and models of intergenerational transmission of trauma was conducted.

The research process involved content analysis, comparative analysis, theoretical synthesis of scientific information, and modelling. Content analysis identified key themes and trends related to the psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants and revealed the interrelationships between the child's personal resources and the psychological state of the parents. Data on the risks associated with traumatic experiences, social isolation, disruption of educational activities, and manifestations of anxiety, fear, and depression in children were structured. A comparative analysis was used to compare the results of Ukrainian studies with international data, in particular Israeli data (Aloni *et al.*, 2020; Rachamim *et al.*, 2025), on the level of PTSD in parents, manifestations of emotional burnout and transgenerational effects of trauma. The obtained generalisations integrated Ukrainian and Israeli data into a general theoretical system of interaction between a child's personal resources and the psychological characteristics of parents that influence the effectiveness of psycho-emotional adaptation and possible prognostic factors of stability. Modelling was used to reveal the mechanisms of influence of the family environment and individual resources on psycho-emotional adaptation. The results were

interpreted through the prism of crisis psychology and theories of family stress transmission, which assessed the impact of parents' psychological state, parenting styles, and overall family functioning on children's adaptation processes. Identification of key predictors of successful psycho-emotional adaptation, such as high resilience, effective coping strategies and internal locus of control in children, combined with a stable and supportive family system, was also emphasised.

## RESULTS

### Theoretical analysis of the psychological consequences of war for children and parents in Ukraine

After the full-scale invasion (2022), the psycho-emotional state of children deteriorated due to the sharp increase in military threats, prolonged social instability, and disruption of normal daily life. Summary data from UNICEF (2024) and the World Health Organisation (2020; 2025) showed an increase in anxiety, fears, emotional regulation disorders, learning difficulties and manifestations of depression among children of different age groups. Prolonged stressors, including the constant threat of danger, internal migration and the destruction of social infrastructure, led to emotional instability, mood swings, impulsive behaviour and regressive reactions. Children in frontline or liberated areas for long periods of time exhibited social isolation, reduced social activity and difficulties interacting with peers. Disruptions to education caused by distance learning, the destruction of schools or frequent changes of educational institutions exacerbated these problems. A UNICEF report for the first half of 2024 confirmed the prevalence of traumatic stress among Ukrainian children, manifested in increased excitability, sleep disturbances, regressive behaviour, and difficulties with emotional self-regulation. A large-scale cross-sectional study by R. Goto *et al.* (2024), which covered 8,096 adolescents from Ukraine and abroad, showed a high level of psycho-emotional stress: 32% of adolescents had signs of moderate or severe depression, 17.9% had moderate or severe anxiety, and 35% had clinically significant psychological trauma. These data indicate a significant prevalence of mental disorders among young people directly or indirectly affected by the war.

The family environment is substantial in shaping children's psycho-emotional state. Parental PTSD, emotional exhaustion and difficulties in regulating emotions directly affect children through changes in parenting styles, emotional availability and stability of family interaction (International Organisation for Migration, 2024; UNICEF, 2025). Children of parents who are frontline soldiers are more likely to experience secondary traumatising, which is manifested through increased anxiety, fears, emotional regulation disorders and behavioural disorders. The psychological state of adults, including chronic fatigue, irritability and loss of motivation, exacerbates the difficulties in restoring stable family interaction. At the same time, the availability of adaptive resources partially mitigates the negative effects of stress. Such resources include family support,

stable intra-family relationships, parental involvement in the child's daily life, and the development of basic coping strategies. However, uneven access to psychological assistance, a shortage of qualified specialists, and barriers to seeking help have significantly limited the ability to respond in a timely manner to children's psycho-emotional difficulties. Key barriers identified by O. Nalyvaiko *et al.* (2025) and V. Dufynets *et al.* (2024) included low awareness among families about available support services and their effectiveness; stigmatisation of mental health, which reduced willingness to seek help; overburdened services and a shortage of child psychologists, especially in frontline and de-occupied communities; logistical difficulties caused by the displacement of families or the lack of stable infrastructure. The combination of these barriers significantly weakens families' ability to receive adequate psychological assistance and, consequently, affects the stability of children's psycho-emotional development in wartime conditions.

The conditions of war increase the vulnerability of family interactions, which affects parents' ability to provide emotional availability, a structured environment, and consistent parenting practices. A decrease in emotional availability due to anxiety, exhaustion, or PTSD symptoms in parents means that children do not receive the necessary sense of support and compassion, which makes it difficult to develop effective coping strategies. Disruption of emotional contact is one of the key factors in the development of increased anxiety, regressive behaviour, and difficulties with emotional regulation in children, especially in families where parents have experienced psychological trauma. In addition, the stability of the family environment is substantial in maintaining a sense of security, which is a basic condition for a child's adaptation. Chaotic living conditions, frequent moves, family separation, changes in adult roles and functions, or high levels of conflict reduce a child's ability to restore emotional balance and increase feelings of unpredictability. Children in such conditions are more likely to demonstrate difficulties in socialisation, reduced motivation to learn, increased irritability, and a tendency toward unique behaviour. A stable family structure, on the contrary, helps children develop a sense of control over their environment, which has a positive effect on the development of an internal locus of control and stress resilience (Naeem *et al.*, 2025).

The psycho-emotional state of parents is a key factor determining the quality of children's adaptation to stressful conditions. Psychotraumatic experiences, PTSD, emotional exhaustion and increased anxiety in parents directly affect children through the mechanism of direct emotional transmission. In this case, the child experiences the emotional state of the adult as part of internal experience: increased irritability, emotional detachment, or unpredictable affective reactions of parents cause increased anxiety, fears, difficulties with self-regulation, and behavioural dysfunction in the child. The lack of emotional availability of the adult limits the child's ability to receive the necessary sense of support, security, and understanding, which complicates

the formation of effective coping strategies and resilience. Along with direct influence, the psycho-emotional state of parents is transformed into an indirect effect through changes in parenting styles and family climate. Studies show that parents with signs of PTSD or emotional exhaustion often develop maladaptive parenting styles: overprotection or emotional distance, inconsistency in rules and requirements, as well as authoritarianism or excessive control. Such styles disrupt the stability of the family environment, reduce the predictability of interaction, and weaken the structure of daily life, which in turn increases the child's emotional instability. Due to climate change, children begin to internalise the instability of adults, which manifests itself in increased anxiety, regressive behaviour, difficulties in concentration and communication with peers. It is important to emphasise that direct and indirect transmission of stress are interrelated: the emotional unavailability of parents reinforces the effect of maladaptive parenting styles, and changes in the family climate maintain a chronic sense of instability and unpredictability for the child (Blikhar, 2024). Thus, the psychotraumatic state of parents, combined with the destruction of the stability of the family environment, creates a complex mechanism of influence on the psycho-emotional development of children, which is manifested in a wide range of psychological, behavioural and social difficulties.

#### **Interrelationships between the psychological state of parents participating in combat operations, family dynamics and personal resources of children**

The results of the analysis demonstrated that the personal resources that determine the ability of Ukrainian children to adapt to the conditions of war and post-war stressors are resilience, effective coping strategies, and a formed locus of control. Coping strategies strengthen adaptive capabilities. Content analysis showed that active coping strategies (seeking social support, rational problem solving, cognitive reappraisal) correlate with lower levels of emotional maladjustment, while avoidance or passive strategies (ignoring the problem, emotional isolation) are associated with increased anxiety, fears, and behavioural disorders.

The indirect effects of PTSD are manifested through changes in family interaction and parenting styles. Parents' traumatic experiences can lead to overprotectiveness, strict control, or emotional detachment, which disrupts the development of a child's internal locus of control, autonomy, and resilience. Additional factors include veterans' comorbid conditions such as depressive symptoms, increased anxiety, emotional instability, or substance abuse, which further destabilise the family environment. Disruption of stability and increased conflict within the family exacerbate children's stress responses and limit their use of adaptive coping strategies. The interaction of family dynamics with the child's individual resources forms a key mechanism for their psycho-emotional adaptation in conditions of prolonged stress caused by war events. Analysis of scientific sources and data from international organisations

has shown that characteristics of family interaction, such as overprotection, anxious parenting styles, emotional distance and general instability in the family environment, have a significant impact on the development of resilience, effective coping strategies and the formation of locus of control in children. Overprotection, which often occurs in parents with high levels of anxiety or who have experienced traumatic events, limits a child's ability to develop autonomy and an internal locus of control. In such conditions, children are less likely to take the initiative in solving problems, relying on adults as their only source of protection. This leads to reduced stress resilience and less effective formation of adaptive coping strategies, in particular active coping or cognitive reappraisal strategies (Williamson *et al.*, 2017).

Anxious parenting styles, which often accompany parental PTSD or emotional exhaustion, also have a maladaptive effect on the child's individual resources. Constant warnings, fears, and demonstrations of danger by adults contribute to the consolidation of an external locus of control, the formation of a sense of unpredictability of the world, and a tendency to avoid stressful situations. Children in such conditions use passive coping strategies, which increases the risk of emotional dysregulation, anxiety and somatisation. Emotional distance, which can develop as a result of secondary traumatisation or parental emotional burnout, weakens the sense of security and reduces the child's ability to self-regulate effectively. The lack of sensitive parental support makes it impossible to develop resilience stably, since it is the emotional availability of adults that serves as the basis for the formation of stress recovery skills. Under such conditions, children demonstrate difficulties in processing emotions, low tolerance for frustration, and an increased tendency toward depressive and anxious manifestations. Family instability, expressed in a disrupted structure of interaction, conflict or inconsistency

of rules, has an additional destabilising effect on personal resources. In an unpredictable environment, it is difficult for children to form an internal locus of control, as their experience is not applicable in prediction of the consequences of personal actions (Łodygowska & Szebanowa, 2018).

The instability of the family system also reduces the effectiveness of coping strategies, as the child is deprived of a model of emotionally regulated adult behaviour and therefore does not have the opportunity to adopt adaptive models of responding to difficulties. At the same time, the analysis showed that the interaction between negative characteristics of family dynamics and individual resources is not one-sided. In children with high initial resilience and an internal locus of control, destabilising factors are less intense: such children make more active use of social support, regulate emotions better, and are less prone to anxious or regressive behaviour. Strong personal resources can partially compensate for the impact of family stressors, but they cannot completely neutralise them (Pan *et al.*, 2021). Therefore, family dynamics and the child's individual resources interact closely, shaping both risks and adaptation potential. The quality of emotional bonds within the family, the stability of the upbringing environment, and the style of interaction determines a child's ability to develop resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and an internal locus of control, which are critically important in the context of prolonged military stressors.

A comparative analysis of the experiences of Ukraine and Israel has identified common risk predictors and contextual differences in the psycho-emotional adaptation of children under the influence of war stressors. In both countries, the key predictors are the psychological difficulties of parents, in particular manifestations of PTSD, emotional burnout and anxious parenting styles, which directly or indirectly affect the psycho-emotional state of children. To summarise the results, a comparative Table 1 was created.

**Table 1.** Analysis of common risk predictors and contextual differences in the psycho-emotional adaptation of children in Ukraine and Israel

Category	Ukraine	Israel	Common risk predictors	Contextual differences
Psychological consequences of parents' combat experience (PTSD, depression, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, etc.)	Prevalence among contract soldiers and veterans of combat-related psychological consequences of PTSD, depressive symptoms, generalised anxiety, emotional exhaustion and impulsivity, which correlate with difficulties in parent-child interaction	The presence of various forms of psychological reactions to combat events in parents, such as PTSD, anxiety disorders, and chronic stress exhaustion, affects the structure of emotional regulation and parenting styles	The psychological consequences of combat experience (PTSD, depression, anxiety, and emotional burnout) directly and indirectly increase the risk of anxiety, depression, dysregulation and secondary traumatisation in children	In Ukraine, the impact is exacerbated by factors such as internal migration, infrastructure destruction, and prolonged separation; in Israel, by the phenomenon of "continuous traumatic stress" and repeated safety threats
Parenting style	Anxious and inconsistent parenting styles; overprotectiveness or emotional distance	Similar maladaptive parenting styles in parents with PTSD or emotional difficulties	Anxious and overprotective parenting styles reduce the effectiveness of resilience and coping strategies in children	In Ukraine, the impact is further exacerbated by instability in living conditions and education; in Israel, by the prevalence of distressing events in everyday life

Table 1. Continued

Category	Ukraine	Israel	Common risk predictors	Contextual differences
Risks for children	Anxiety, fears, emotional regulation disorders, learning difficulties, and social isolation	Increased levels of PTSD, depressive symptoms, difficulties in interpersonal relationships, and emotional dysregulation	Emotional and behavioural disorders, difficulties with self-regulation and adaptation to stress	Social isolation and disruption to education are more pronounced in Ukraine; in Israel, there is an indirect impact due to recurring military threats
Children's personal resources	Resilience, active coping strategies, and an internal locus of control mitigate the impact of stressors	Similar resources compensate for the negative impact of parental PTSD	High resilience and an internal locus of control reduce maladjustment	In Ukraine, the effect is mitigated by a combination of social and everyday stressors; in Israel, it is due to repeated psychological pressure

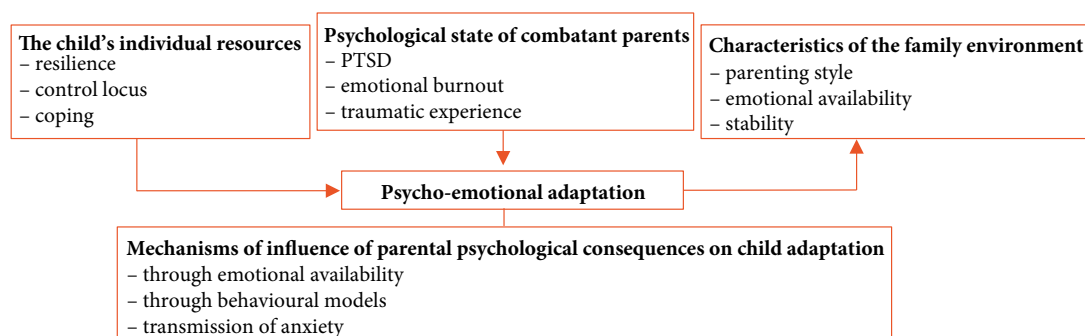
**Source:** compiled by the authors based on R. Aloni *et al.* (2020), B. Mykhaylov *et al.* (2023), L. Rachamim *et al.* (2025), Y. Bondarenko *et al.* (2025)

Research in Ukraine and Israel shows that parental PTSD and emotional difficulties significantly affect the psycho-emotional state of children, increasing levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms and PTSD symptoms. This impact is manifested both through the direct effect of parental emotional availability and indirectly through changes in parenting styles (Rachamim *et al.*, 2025; Bondarenko *et al.*, 2025). At the same time, high levels of resilience, effective coping strategies and an internal locus of control in children mitigate the negative effects of family stressors, indicating the universal role of personal resources in psycho-emotional adaptation. Contextual conditions determine the specifics of psycho-emotional difficulties. In Ukraine, social isolation among children is more pronounced due to the prolonged war, large-scale destruction of housing and social infrastructure, frequent internal displacement, and separation from parents. The loss of a stable school environment and limited opportunities for interaction with peers fragments social ties, leading to avoidance of contact, reduced motivation to communicate, and difficulties in integrating into new groups. Therefore, social isolation among Ukrainian children has infrastructural and domestic roots and is exacerbated by prolonged social instability. In Israel, the main factor is constant, repeated threats (rocket attacks, sirens), which form the phenomenon of continuous traumatic stress. Social infrastructure and the school environment remain relatively stable, so social isolation is less

pronounced. However, chronic stress caused by constant threats leads to emotional dysregulation: impulsive reactions, sudden mood swings, difficulty concentrating and self-control. Common to both countries is the significant impact of parental PTSD, which reduces the emotional availability of adults and contributes to maladaptive parenting styles. In Ukraine, this effect is further exacerbated by the breakdown of family structures and prolonged separation, while in Israel, it is exacerbated by the chronic exhaustion of parents due to repeated threats. Thus, although the basic risk factors are similar, in Ukraine, children's psycho-emotional problems are of a social-contact nature, while in Israel, they are manifested mainly as regulatory-emotional difficulties.

#### Analysis of the theoretical model of psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants

The theoretical model of psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants is constructed as a multi-level system of interaction between individual, family and parental psychological factors, which jointly determine the trajectories of a child's development and emotional stability in conditions of war and post-war stressors. Its structure comprises three key blocks: the child's individual resources, the psychological state of combatant parents, and the characteristics of the family environment, each of which functions as a separate but interdependent component of the adaptation system (Fig. 1).



**Figure 1.** A theoretical model of effective psycho-emotional adaptation of children in wartime conditions has been created  
**Source:** compiled by the authors based on E. McElroy *et al.* (2024), E. Pfeiffer *et al.* (2024)

The first block of the model is denoted as the internal basis for stability and the ability to cope with stress. Resilience determines mental flexibility and the potential for recovery after traumatic events, ensuring the ability to return to a basic level of functioning even in difficult conditions. The locus of control, which is formed in the process of interaction with the environment, determines the child's perception of their role in influencing events: an internal locus promotes active responses, while an external locus can increase anxiety and helplessness. Coping strategies encompass self-regulation tools, from problem-oriented actions to emotional management skills, and determine the extent to which a child can respond constructively to stressors without forming maladaptive behavioural patterns. The second block is one of the most significant external factors influencing a child's psycho-emotional development. PTSD symptoms, including hyperarousal, avoidance, intrusive memories, and emotional numbness, significantly alter the nature of parental functioning. They reduce emotional availability, make it difficult to maintain stable behaviour, and increase the risk of inconsistent parenting practices. The emotional exhaustion that accompanies traumatic experiences can lead to alienation, decreased sensitivity, and sometimes increased irritability or impulsivity. Traumatic experiences also have an intergenerational dimension: children learn models of stress response, emotional scenarios and worldviews from their parents, which can shape their propensity for anxiety, hyper-responsibility or emotional instability. The third block of the model mediates between the parents' state and the child's individual capabilities. Parenting style is central, as anxious or overprotective styles can reduce a child's autonomy and exacerbate fears, while supportive styles promote the development of confidence, independence, and coping skills. The emotional availability of parents determines the quality of emotional interaction: it lack reduces the child's ability to receive external regulation, which is especially important during the stages of psychological security formation. The stability of the family system creates a structured environment in which the child can predict adult reactions, comprehend rules and feel protected; instability, on the other hand, increases psycho-emotional risks and impairs the child's ability to use personal resources.

The mechanisms of parental PTSD's impact on a child's adaptation are realised through several interrelated channels. First, reduced emotional availability disrupts the child's emotional regulation processes and complicates the formation of trust and a basic sense of security. Through behavioural models, children learn both adaptive and maladaptive ways of responding to stress, which shape long-term coping patterns. The mechanism of anxiety transmission is manifested in the fact that children not only observe but also emotionally assimilate their parents' anxious attitudes and expectations, responding to the world with similar emotional reactions. In summary, the model shows that effective psycho-emotional adaptation in children is formed when the child's strong individual resources are

realised in a supportive, stable and emotionally sensitive family environment capable of compensating for some of the negative effects of parental trauma. The combination of high levels of parental PTSD, low family life structure and maladaptive parenting styles significantly increases the risk of anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional regulation problems and behavioural disorders in children. In this sense, the model serves not only as a description of influences, but also as a conceptual basis for the development of psychological support programmes for military families, both at the level of individual support for children and at the level of family-oriented and parental interventions.

### **Practical recommendations for providing psychological and emotional support to children of combatants**

Recommendations based on an analysis of international practices by UNICEF, the World Health Organisation and the International Organisation for Migration emphasise the need for a comprehensive approach to supporting children of combatants, incorporating the level of the child, parents and family system. Firstly, child-centred efforts should seek to enhance resilience by creating an environment that provides a sense of security, predictability and emotional support. Supporting a positive self-image, belief in personal abilities and the development of stress recovery skills are in line with UNICEF (2025) recommendations on developing children's mental resilience in armed conflict contexts. Another essential principle is the development of adaptive coping strategies that help children recognise and regulate their emotions, use social support and constructively overcome difficulties. Such approaches emphasise the significance of developing emotional self-regulation skills to reduce the impact of traumatic stress. Social integration of children is emphasised, in particular, strengthening of their relationships with peers, which contributes to the formation of a sense of belonging and creates additional resources for overcoming stressful experiences.

Support for parents, especially those who have experience of combat, is the second key area of recommendations. International organisations emphasise the need to increase their emotional availability, which involves the ability to establish stable emotional contact with the child, even in conditions of personal stress or psychological exhaustion. Awareness and control of personal reactions can reduce the risk of transmitting anxiety or hyperreactivity to the child, which is important for the prevention of secondary traumatisation and correlates with the World Health Organisation (2025) recommendations for working with veterans. A substantial component of support is also maintaining stable family roles and predictable routines, as a structured environment reduces the level of uncertainty that often accompanies children in families where the father or mother has combat experience. In addition, parents are advised to recognise the possible impact of PTSD symptoms and combat trauma on the family atmosphere and, if necessary, seek help in line with the practices of the International Organisation for Migration (2024) in the field of mental health

for combatants. At the family system level, the recommendations emphasise the importance of creating conditions that promote healthy family interaction and prevent the transgenerational transmission of traumatic experiences. Stable and open communication, the development of problem-solving skills and mutual support help to reduce the risks of emotional isolation and misunderstanding. This approach is consistent with family-oriented support models developed by UNICEF (2024) for families experiencing conflict or loss. The prevention of transgenerational trauma involves the creation of a safe emotional environment in which combat experiences do not become a source of excessive anxiety, aggression, or emotional coldness towards children. International organisations emphasise that preventing the transmission of trauma between generations is key to maintaining a child's psychological well-being. In addition, supporting family resources, particularly emotional and social resources, creates a foundation for stability and adaptive functioning of the family system in difficult life circumstances. The child can then use their potential, resilience, ability to self-regulate their emotions, and constructive coping strategies more fully, which are key predictors of successful psycho-emotional adaptation.

## DISCUSSION

The results of the study demonstrated that the key personal and psychological predictors of the psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants were their level of resilience, the development of constructive coping strategies, and their locus of control. High resilience ensures a child's ability to restore emotional balance after stressful events, while active, problem-oriented coping mechanisms contribute to more effective management of experiences and behavioural reactions in difficult situations. These findings are consistent with the results of S. Valero-Moreno *et al.* (2021), demonstrating that even under adverse pandemic conditions, the internal psychological resources of the family, including the resilience and self-regulation skills of children, determined their level of emotional well-being. The researchers emphasised that children's ability to adapt to stress depended on a combination of individual and family resources, which is fully consistent with the results obtained. Similarly, the findings of K. Watson *et al.* (2025) confirmed the importance of adaptive coping strategies for maintaining emotional stability in adolescents in situations of increased family stress. The study demonstrated that children who used active and flexible coping strategies were better able to control their emotional reactions and interact more effectively with their social environment, which is fully consistent with the results of this study. This indicates that coping mechanisms are one of the central factors of adaptation in the context of psychotraumatic events experienced by military families. At the same time, the data demonstrated that a child's personal resources cannot be considered separately from the conditions of the family environment. Adaptation processes are significantly influenced by the quality of upbringing, the level of

emotional support, and the stability of interactions within the family. These patterns corresponded with the findings of V. Panula *et al.* (2020), proving that the psychosocial well-being of parents is a significant factor in the development of children's social competence. The study emphasised that the level of parental stability and the ability to provide emotional support directly influence the formation of children's ability to regulate emotions and build healthy interpersonal relationships. In view of this, the results of this study confirmed that even a high level of resilience in a child may be insufficient in conditions of chronic family stress or emotional coldness. Similar trends were observed in S. Scaini *et al.* (2023), determining that emotionally unstable or anxious parenting styles significantly increased the probability of children developing internal anxiety, emotional regulation difficulties, and problematic behaviour.

In addition, this study emphasised the impact of PTSD in combatant parents. The results showed that pronounced PTSD symptoms indirectly reduce children's emotional regulation by decreasing parental sensitivity and increasing emotional distance. At the same time, P. Watson & A. Osborne (2025) demonstrated that children of parents with PTSD demonstrated impaired social interaction, increased anxiety, and a tendency toward social isolation, a trend that fully confirmed the results of this study. The results of this study also showed that an anxious parenting style can systematically increase the risk of emotional dependence and reduced autonomy in children. This was consistent with the findings of N. Zhang *et al.* (2020), demonstrating that increased emotional care and control by parents in military families was often accompanied by lower levels of adaptability in children. The results of this study were also consistent with the review by A. Ohlsson *et al.* (2024), which emphasised that the instability of parental responses after military missions had a negative impact on children's emotional security. Establishing the mechanism of anxiety transfer from parents to children was an important aspect. The results of this study demonstrated that parental anxiety serves as a predictor of anxiety and depressive symptoms in children. This was consistent with the findings of M. Rogers *et al.* (2025), determining similar patterns in children of Australian military families, where the emotional state of parents was directly correlated with behavioural maladjustment in children. Similar results were obtained in a study by R. Pessoa dos Santos *et al.* (2021), emphasising the role of mutual support within the family during military missions as a factor that mitigated children's anxiety reactions.

The results of the study showed that the stability of the family system is one of the most significant factors in maintaining the psycho-emotional balance of children. This was fully consistent with the findings of P. Lester *et al.* (2024), establishing that children of military personnel demonstrated higher levels of adaptability in conditions of structured family practices and emotional sensitivity on the part of adults. In addition, the psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants is shaped by a combination of individual resources, the psychological state of parents,

and characteristics of the family environment. A study by G. Maina *et al.* (2021) also emphasised that even in families with other types of maladaptive factors, the interaction of individual and family variables determined the characteristics of child adaptation. The results also showed that an important condition for the effective psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants is the level of overall functioning of the family system. This trend was consistent with the findings of M. Farnsworth & C. O'Neal (2024), determining that the psychological well-being of adolescents from military families depended largely on how effectively the family functioned as a whole system, and that family support enhanced the adaptability of the coping strategies chosen by children. The results of the study confirmed that the vulnerability of children's psycho-emotional sphere increases in conditions of impaired communication or conflictual relationships between parents.

The characteristics of children's emotional sensitivity identified in the study, in particular, increased reactivity in response to sudden changes in the family environment, also empirically correlated with the conclusions of E. Caffo *et al.* (2021). In particular, the study showed that during crisis events (pandemic, military threats, family stressors), the deterioration of mental health in children and adolescents was closely associated with high emotional vulnerability and insufficient development of emotional regulation. This was also consistent with the findings of H.-J. Chen *et al.* (2025) determined that adolescents' motivational resilience and internal resources had a positive impact on their psycho-emotional well-being and academic performance. Although their study focused on Taiwanese adolescents, including immigrant children, the parallels with the present findings emphasised that intrinsic motivation and emotional resilience are universal predictors of adaptation. The analysis revealed that the level of parental involvement, in particular emotional closeness, participation in daily activities and stability of interactions, correlates with the psycho-emotional stability of children. The role of individual cognitive-emotional characteristics of children, in particular the ability to self-reflect, control impulses and construct positive interpretations of stressful events, was also identified. These findings correlate with those of D. Bastiaansen *et al.* (2020), demonstrating that the quality of life of children with mental disorders largely depended on individual cognitive resources and emotional regulation skills. Therefore, a child's intellectual and emotional resources serve as a significant predictor of their socio-psychological functioning. Thus, the results of the study confirmed the multidimensional nature of the psycho-emotional adaptation of children of combatants and showed that it is the integration of the child's individual resources with a supportive family environment that can partially compensate for the negative effects of parental PTSD, as well as associated depressive symptoms, increased anxiety, emotional instability, or substance abuse. This fully correlates with the above-mentioned studies, which indicate the universality of such patterns in military families in different countries.

## CONCLUSIONS

Theoretical analysis showed that prolonged exposure of children to war conditions led to persistent psycho-emotional disorders, including increased anxiety, depressive reactions, difficulties with emotional regulation, and behavioural disorders. The psycho-emotional state of children was closely dependent on the psychological state of adults: PTSD, depression, hyperactivity, and self-regulation disorders in parents worsened the quality of family interaction and caused secondary traumatisation, increasing the risks of maladjustment in children. The analysis highlighted the key role of the family environment in shaping a child's adaptive abilities. Supportive parenting practices and emotional stability in the family acted as protective factors, while an authoritarian or anxious-overprotective style, characteristic of parents with traumatic experiences, was associated with emotional regulation disorders and increased anxiety in children. A synthesis of theoretical sources confirmed the importance of resilience, adaptive coping strategies, and an internal locus of control in ensuring a child's psycho-emotional stability.

A comparison of the Ukrainian and Israeli contexts revealed a common pattern, as the psycho-emotional adaptation of children is determined by the level of psychological well-being of their parents. At the same time, differences in the structure of stressors lead to differences in the nature of disorders. In Israel, the influence of continuous traumatisation dominates, while in Ukraine, the psycho-emotional consequences are exacerbated by a combination of military, migration, social and educational factors. The theoretical model that summarised these provisions reveals the psycho-emotional adaptation of children as a result of the interaction of individual characteristics, family dynamics and the psychological state of parents. The greatest adaptive potential is formed in a situation where the child's strong personal resources are combined with a supportive and stable family environment. On the other hand, a combination of severe parental PTSD, emotional instability and unsystematic parenting practices significantly increases the risk of anxiety, depression and behavioural disorders in children. A limitation of the study is that some of the available data were based on secondary sources and broad estimates, which limited the possibility of detailed analysis. Prospects for further research include the development of empirical models using longitudinal data, which can be used for tracking the dynamics of children's psycho-emotional adaptation.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

None.

## FUNDING

None.

## CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

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### Назар Процик

Аспірант

Тернопільський національний педагогічний університет імені Володимира Гнатюка  
46027, вул. Максима Кривоноса, 2, м. Тернопіль, Україна  
<https://orcid.org/0009-0001-4779-6785>

### Наталія Савелюк

Доктор психологічних наук, професор

Тернопільський національний педагогічний університет імені Володимира Гнатюка  
46027, вул. Максима Кривоноса, 2, м. Тернопіль, Україна  
<https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5246-9677>

## Особистісні предиктори психоемоційної адаптації дітей учасників бойових дій

**Анотація.** Метою дослідження було концептуально обґрунтувати особливості взаємовпливу психоемоційних процесів і станів дітей та батьків-учасників бойових дій. У роботі застосовувався теоретико-аналітичний підхід із використанням контент-аналізу емпіричних і моніторингових джерел. Теоретичний огляд засвідчив, що тривале перебування дітей у ситуації війни супроводжувалося поширенням клінічно значущих стресових реакцій, зокрема підвищенням рівнів тривоги, депресивності та порушень емоційної регуляції. Узагальнення даних міжнародних моніторингових показало, що населення України повідомляли про помірний або тяжкий рівень тривожності, а також мали симптоми посттравматичного стресового розладу (ПТСР), що формувало несприятливе психоемоційне тло для сімей із дітьми. Аналіз літератури також продемонстрував значний вплив психологічного стану батьків на емоційне функціонування дітей: симптоми ПТСР, гіперзбудливість і депресивні прояви дорослих зумовлювали зниження емоційної доступності, порушення сімейної взаємодії та підвищували ризик вторинної травматизації. Встановлено, що ключовими предикторами адаптації виступали рівень резиліентності, типи копінг-стратегій і характер локусу контролю. Зроблено висновок, що підтримка психологічної стійкості дітей вимагала комплексних сімейно орієнтованих інтервенцій та системної роботи з батьківськими стресовими реакціями. Отримані результати можуть бути використані практичними психологами, соціальними працівниками, освітніми установами та фахівцями системи охорони здоров'я для розроблення цільових програм підтримки психоемоційної стійкості дітей і сімей, які постраждали від воєнних дій

**Ключові слова:** резиліентність; копінг-стратегії; підтримка; стрес; захисні чинники