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## Methodological aspects of measuring levels of veterans' social adaptation

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**Abstract.** This paper presents the classical and modern sociological approaches to the analysis of social adaptation and integration; the features of social adaptation of veterans of armed conflicts are revealed. The methodology for measuring the levels of social adaptation of veterans of armed conflicts is presented and tested. It has been found that the majority of Ukrainian veterans has the middle level of social adaptation (39%); they currently need support from society in order to finally adapt to civilian life. 33% of veterans have not adapted to civilian life; such veterans usually do not have a job/housing/family/children. 28% of Ukrainian veterans have high level of social adaptability.

**Keywords.** Social adaptation; veterans; civilian field; subjective and objective indicators of social adaptation

### 1. Introduction

The problem of social adaptation of veterans is relevant in those countries in which there are armed conflicts. There is a need to develop social projects for facilitating the post-military transition of veterans of armed conflicts to the civilian field and provide them with social support in the process of social adaptation in employment, education and everyday life contexts. In Ukrainian society, this problem has become especially relevant in connection with the armed conflicts in the Eastern Ukraine (the Donbass). The problem of social adaptation of service(wo)men is interdisciplinary, so it should be studied by sociologists, psychologists and other humanitarians. However, nowadays, the problem of social adaptation of veterans is studied mainly by psychologists. In this regard, it becomes necessary to develop a sociological methodology for measuring the levels of social adaptation of veterans who participated in armed conflicts.

We use such a definition of social adaptation: it is a process and result of adaptation of an individual, a social group, an organization or society to internal and external changes in public life. The notion of social readaptation means that after serving in the army or taking part in combat operations, veterans need to go through the process of adaptation to civilian life, even if their social adaptation was successful before serving in the army. Social readaptation of veterans means the process and result of adaptation of a veteran to the social environment after returning from the army to a previous or new place of residence, the indicators of which are 1) the adoption of socio-cultural values and norms of the new environment; 2) placement in the

educational or professional sphere; 3) establishing friendly, romantic or marital relations with other people, gaining membership in social groups; 4) identification with the new social environment [2].

## **2. Literature Review**

The topic of social adaptation of individuals, social groups or societies has always played a significant role in classical and modern sociology. Let us consider historical and sociological interpretations of the concept of social adaptation and pay special attention to the social adaptation of veterans. In sociology, the concept of adaptation or integration has been firstly used by H. Spencer and E. Durkheim. H. Spencer has presented the biological-evolutionary interpretation of this phenomenon and has argued that the integration into a society is the result of achieving a balance between social organisms and the environment, after which structural changes in the functioning of society are suspended. According to H. Spencer, “integration can arise from the actual convergence of parts that are similar in nature” [10]. We can assume that if veterans do not achieve socio-psychological balance with the social environment, their adaptation will not be complete. E. Durkheim believed that the social adaptation of an individual is the result of his/her adaptation to existing social norms. On the contrary, if a person does not comply with the regulatory requirements of a particular society and does not try to adapt to life rules of this society, he/she can be considered as an unadapted one. According to E. Durkheim, social integration as a form of adaptation is “a strong sense of dependence of the individual on society; he learns to evaluate himself according to true value, that is, to consider himself only as part of the whole, as an organ of the organism” [1].

M. Weber has linked the problem of social adaptation of a person with the level of rationalization of his/her actions. The sociologist singled out four types of social action (goal rational, value-rational, affective and traditional actions). In the concept of M. Weber, social adaptation becomes possible if human behavior is conscious, motivated, focused on other individuals and has rational goals [12].

T. Parsons paid considerable attention to the topic of social adaptation of systems (both social systems and personality systems), which identified four main social functions (goal attainment, adaptation, integration and latency). According to T. Parsons, each person adapts to the social environment when he/she accepts the basic norms, values and cultural patterns of a particular society, as a result of which he/she becomes part of it, identifies with it. T. Parsons noted that integration into society of its members implies the existence of a zone of interpenetration between social and personal systems. Parts of the cultural and social systems are internalized in individuals, but at the same time, parts of the cultural system are institutionalized in society [8].

R. Merton considered several forms of adaptation to the social structure – conformity, innovation, ritualism, retreatism and rebellion [6]. The first type of adaptation, conformity, is not deviant and means that the goals of an individual are consistent with socially accepted ways of achieving them. Innovation deals with the use of means prohibited by law to achieve goals, if they are effective and allow a person to quickly achieve a higher material status. Ritualism is a characteristic of the middle class, whose behavior is law-abiding but at the same time unattainable. Retreatism is an ineffective way of fleeing a person from a reality to which he/she cannot adapt. Rebellion can be defined as a creative variant of deviant adaptation, which involves rejection of existing social norms and values and production the new values, that are more moral than rejected ones [6].

The study of social adaptation in the context of migration problems began in 20-30s of the twentieth century in Chicago university by R. Park, W. Thomas and F. Znanetsky.

W. Thomas and F. Znanetsky considered adaptation in the context of interaction of humans' social values and social attitudes [11]. R. Park singled out four forms of human adaptation – competition, conflict, accommodation and assimilation. R. Park considered that assimilation is the highest stage in the process of adaptation of an individual to the social reality [7].

In Ukrainian science, the topic of social adaptation of veterans is studied mainly by psychologists. Let us consider findings of psychological studies of problems faced by service(wo)man that took part in hostilities in the Donbass. According to I. Guzenko, service(wo)man experience strong emotional reactions in hostility situations, which might further negatively affect the process of their adaptation to civilian life. Extreme conditions of military service can cause various psychological emotions such as fear, loneliness, fatigue, distrust, depressive states (which can manifest as hysteria, anxiety, low self-esteem, depression, suicidal thoughts, etc.) and deviant behavior [3].

According to M. Humenna, a service(wo)man who takes part in hostilities cannot avoid extreme situations, but must adapt to them, which affects his/her psychological state. Therefore, when a participant in hostilities returns to civilian life, it is possible to observe certain changes in his/her behavior, which is associated with trauma [4]. R. Sokolovsky revealed the main negative psychological factors faced by combatants, which are extremely high responsibility, loss of comrades, great danger, tension, lack of information and time [9]. R. Sokolovsky notes that the greatest impact on the psychological state of combatants has the injury or death of comrades, which may affect the further process of their adaptation to civilian life after demobilization.

V. Yarovy notes that the social integration of combatants occurs after the return of demobilized combatants to work in civilian field. He notes that former combatants are often unwilling to return to their previous workplaces as a result of changing of their psyche [13]. A negative role in the process of social adaptation of veterans is played by the fact that society is not ready to accept them such as they returned from the army. So, firstly, it is necessary to conduct a socio-psychological rehabilitation of combatants, that includes restoration of their working capacity; restoration of their professional potential; prevention of abuse of psychoactive substances by participants in hostilities [13].

The *purpose* of the article is to develop a sociological methodology for measuring the levels of social adaptation of veterans to the civil field.

### **3. Methodology of measuring of levels of veterans' social adaptation**

L. Korel distinguishes between mental (assimilation of new ideas, norms and values at the level of consciousness) and behavioral (manifestation of acquired norms and values in behavioral actions and interactions) adaptation [5]. There might be a conflict between these levels of adaptive behavior (for example, at the level of consciousness a person accepts a new social environment, but on the basis of objective indicators (such as lack of work, housing, social contacts with other people et cetera) he/she might be not adapted. The mental indicators include 1) the subjective satisfaction of the veteran with his/her new social position; 2) integration of a subject into the social environment; 3) identification with the new social environment; 4) a positive assessment of the attitude to the veteran by society, state, mass-media. Behavioral indicators include 1) availability of work or education; 2) availability of own or rented housing; 3) income; 4) the presence of friendly, romantic or marital relations with other people, membership in various social groups.

It should be noted that the presence of a high level of social adaptation does not mean its completion. It can be assumed that the level of adaptability of a particular person may change at different stages of his/her existence (for example, if a young veteran may have a low level of

social adaptability, it might become medium or high when the veteran reaches a more mature age).

It is worth stressing that it is necessary to measure the level of social adaptability of veterans at least 10 months after their returning from the army to civilian life. In the western sociology, a conditional boundary has been established in one year, which is required by veterans for social adaptation.

Let us distinguish three levels of social adaptation of veterans: high (on the mental and behavioral level, indicators of adaptability are evident); middle (some indicators of adaptability, either on the mental, or on the behavioral level are absent) and low (indicators of adaptability on the mental and behavioral levels are absent).

The high level of social adaptation of a veteran include 1) subjective indicators, such as satisfaction with one's life / income / work / society's attitude to a veteran; positive mood; identification with the new social environment; 2) objective indicators, such as the presence of a family and the stability of relations with it; availability of work and income sufficient for living; availability of housing and satisfaction with its quality.

The low level of social adaptation of a veteran includes 1) subjective indicators, such as dissatisfaction with the relationship with family / society; dissatisfaction with society's attitude to a veteran; pessimistic mood; lack of identification with the new social environment; 2) objective indicators, such as difficulties in employment or the presence of work that is not liked; low income; lack of own housing or dissatisfaction with the quality of housing.

The middle level of social adaptation of a veteran includes a "mixed" type of adaptation. There might be present some signs of both high and low levels of adaptation; or subjective and objective indicators of adaptability are presented at the middle level.

The following questions can be used to measure three levels of social adaptation of veterans.

The objective indicators of social adaptation of veterans are the following:

1) the availability of housing (*What are your living conditions: rent; live with relatives; have your own apartment / house; other*).

2) availability of work (*Are you currently employed? Yes; no; I am looking for a job; I cannot work due to my health condition. Do you like your job? Yes, I like it; no, I do not like it*).

3) income level (*Assess the financial situation of your family for the last 2-3 months: forced to save even on food; enough money only for food; enough money for basic needs (food, clothing, shoes, hygiene); enough money for basic and additional needs (entertainment, recreation); we live in full abundance*).

4) having a family (*Are you married? Yes; no; I am in a civil marriage. Do you have children? Yes; no*).

The subjective indicators of social adaptation of veterans are the following:

1) life satisfaction (*How satisfied are you with your life in general?*) (*Measured on a 5-point scale, where 1 – completely dissatisfied to 5 – completely satisfied*).

2) satisfaction with professional activity (*How satisfied are you with your professional activity?*) (*Measured on a 5-point scale, where 1 – completely dissatisfied to 5 – completely satisfied*).

3) satisfaction with living conditions (*Are you satisfied with living conditions? Yes; no; it is difficult to answer*).

4) an optimistic assessment of the life situation (*How would you assess your life situation at the moment? Everything is going well, should get even better; everything is fine, it could be worse; everything is bad, I do not hope for the best*).

5) a sense of belonging to a new social environment (*How strong is your sense of belonging to your place of residence? Measured on a 5-point scale, where 1 – a weak sense of belonging, and 5 – very strong one*).

6) subjective assessment of society's attitude to veterans (*How, in your opinion, people treat veterans? In general, friendly; in general, indifferent; in general, unfriendly*).

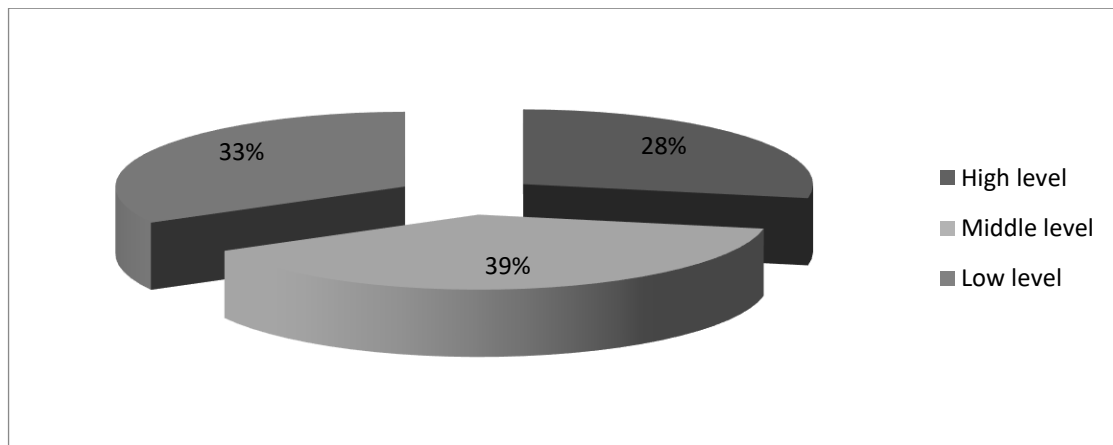
Due to the reason that the processes of social adaptation of veterans are influenced by socially and psychologically support of family members, people around and society, it is necessary to find out who helps veterans to solve the problems of their social readaptation in Ukrainian society. For this, we ask veterans the following question:

*Who helped you to solve various life problems after returning from the army?*

- 1) relatives;
- 2) friends;
- 3) state;
- 4) volunteers;
- 5) I rely only on myself;
- 6) other \_\_\_\_\_.

It is also advisable to use a self-assessment of the level of social adaptability of veterans (*Please assess how fully you were able to adapt to civilian life? Measured on a 5-point scale, where 1 – not at all to 5 – fully adapted*).

Using this methodology, we conducted a sociological study "The impact of military identity of veterans on their social adaptation" in 2019-2020 among Ukrainian veterans (who took part in Donbass hostilities). 400 veterans were interviewed (n = 400), of which 31% (124 persons) were women, 69% (276 persons) were men. According to the results of the study, three groups of veterans were identified by levels of social adaptability (high, medium, low levels): 28% of veterans with the high level of social adaptability; 39% with the middle and 33% with the low levels (see Fig.1).



**Figure 1.** Levels of social adaptability of Ukrainian veterans

#### 4. Conclusions

The article presents the classical and modern sociological approaches to the analysis of social adaptation and integration; the features of social adaptation of veterans of armed conflicts are revealed. Social readaptation of veterans means the process and result of adaptation of a veteran to the social environment after returning from the army to a previous or new place of residence, the indicators of which are 1) the adoption of socio-cultural values and norms of the new environment; 2) placement in the educational or professional sphere; 3) establishing

friendly, romantic or marital relations with other people, gaining membership in social groups; 4) identification with the new social environment. The methodology for measuring the levels of social adaptation of veterans of armed conflicts is presented and tested. Three levels of social adaptation of veterans are distinguished such as high (on the mental and behavioral level, indicators of adaptability are evident); middle (some indicators of adaptability, either on the mental, or on the behavioral level are absent) and low (indicators of adaptability on the mental and behavioral levels are absent) levels.

It has been found that the majority of Ukrainian veterans has the middle level of social adaptation (39%); they currently need support from family/friends/state, etc. in order to finally adapt to civilian life. 33% of veterans have not adapted to civilian life; such veterans usually do not have a job/housing/family/children; they feel that they are treated either indifferently or unfriendly. 28% of Ukrainian veterans have high level of social adaptability, which means that they have successfully adapted to civilian life.

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