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**PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION OF PERSONS RELEASED FROM CAPTIVITY
AS A FUNDAMENTAL COMPONENT OF THE STATE REINTEGRATION SYSTEM:
REGULATORY GUARANTEES**

Анотація. У статті здійснено комплексне дослідження психологічної реабілітації звільнених з полону осіб як базової складової державної системи реінтеграції в умовах повномасштабної війни та післявоєнного відновлення України. Обґрунтовано, що перебування у полоні є однією з найбільш тяжких форм екстремальної психотравматизації, яка супроводжується тривалим психологічним тиском, ізоляцією, фізичним і психічним насильством та спричиняє комплексні негативні наслідки для психічного здоров'я особи. Встановлено, що наслідки полону проявляються у вигляді посттравматичних стресових розладів, тривожних і депресивних станів, емоційної дезадаптації, порушення соціального функціонування та кризи ідентичності, що обумовлює необхідність довготривалого психологічного супроводу та постізоляційної підтримки.

Проаналізовано сучасне нормативно-правове забезпечення права осіб, звільнених з полону, на психологічну допомогу та психологічну реабілітацію. Досліджено положення Закону України «Про систему охорони психічного здоров'я», Закону України «Про соціальний і правовий захист осіб, стосовно яких встановлено факт позбавлення особистої свободи внаслідок збройної агресії проти України, та членів їхніх сімей», а також підзаконних нормативно-правових актів Кабінету Міністрів України, Міністерства оборони України та Міністерства внутрішніх справ України у сфері реінтеграції звільнених осіб.

Особливу увагу приділено аналізу декомпресії (постізоляційної) як первинної форми психологічної реабілітації, спрямованої на стабілізацію психоемоційного стану, відновлення відчуття безпеки та поступове опрацювання травматичного досвіду. Обґрунтовано доцільність впровадження людиноцентричного, травмоінформованого та ресурсно орієнтованого підходів у системі психологічної реабілітації звільнених з полону. Встановлено, що сучасна державна політика у сфері психічного здоров'я поступово трансформується від медичної та компенсаторної моделі до моделі посттравматичного зростання, спрямованої на відновлення адаптаційного потенціалу особистості та її соціальної реінтеграції.

Ключові слова: полон; психологічна реабілітація; психологічна допомога; декомпресія (постізоляційна); ПТСР; звільнені цивільні особи; звільнені оборонці України; нормативні гарантії; державна система реінтеграції.

Abstract. The article provides a comprehensive study of the psychological rehabilitation of persons released from captivity as a fundamental component of the state reintegration system under conditions of the full-scale war and the post-war recovery of Ukraine. It is substantiated that captivity constitutes one of the most severe forms of extreme psychological traumatization, accompanied by prolonged psychological pressure, isolation, physical and psychological violence, and resulting in complex adverse consequences for an individual's mental health. It has been established that the consequences of captivity manifest themselves in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder, anxiety and depressive conditions, emotional maladjustment, impaired social functioning, and identity crisis, thereby necessitating long-term psychological support and post-isolation assistance.

The article analyzes the contemporary regulatory and legal framework governing the right of persons released from captivity to psychological assistance and psychological rehabilitation. Particular attention is paid to the provisions of the Law of Ukraine «On the Mental Health Care System», the Law of Ukraine «On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Recognized as Having Been Deprived of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression against Ukraine, and Their Family Members», as well as subordinate legal acts of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in the field of reintegration of released persons.

Special attention is devoted to the analysis of post-isolation decompression as the primary form of psychological rehabilitation aimed at stabilizing the psycho-emotional state, restoring a sense of safety, and facilitating the gradual processing of traumatic experiences. The expediency of implementing person-centered, trauma-informed, and resource-oriented approaches within the system of psychological rehabilitation for persons released from captivity is substantiated. It is established that contemporary state policy in the field of mental health is gradually transforming from a predominantly medical and compensatory model toward a post-traumatic growth model focused on restoring the adaptive potential of the individual and ensuring their social reintegration.

Keywords: captivity; psychological rehabilitation; psychological assistance; post-isolation decompression; PTSD; released civilians; released defenders of Ukraine; regulatory guarantees; state reintegration system.

Problem Statement. The unprecedented scale of the armed aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, accompanied by systematic violations of international humanitarian law, mass cases of unlawful detention of Ukrainian defenders and civilians in captivity, the use of physical and psychological violence, torture, information and psychological pressure, and prolonged isolation, determines the relevance of this issue. Return from captivity is associated with complex psycho-emotional consequences, including PTSD, anxiety and depressive disorders, impaired social adaptation, identity crisis, difficulties in communication and reintegration into family and civilian environments. Currently, a significant number of released persons require comprehensive psychological recovery, psychosocial support, and long-term post-isolation assistance.

Contemporary Ukrainian scholarly studies (V. Apalkov, V. Bosniuk, M. Halych, V. Dotsenko, N. Zaretska, S. Pashkovskiyi, V. Chorna, Yu. Shyrobokov, O. Shportun, N. Yavorska, and others) demonstrate that captivity is regarded as one of the most severe forms of extreme traumatic experience affecting not only an individual's mental state but also their social functioning and ability to restore full-fledged life activity. The interdisciplinary nature of the issue requires a comprehensive approach to the formation and implementation of state policy regarding the reintegration of such a sensitive category as persons released from captivity.

The issue becomes particularly relevant in the context of the increasing number of Ukrainian defenders returning from captivity (according to official data from the Coordination Headquarters [1]) and the necessity of establishing an effective state reintegration system. As of 2025–2026, Ukraine has been gradually developing a comprehensive system of medical, psychological, rehabilitative, and social assistance for released persons, including specialized reintegration centers, psychosocial support, decompression measures, crisis counseling, and interagency cooperation.

At the same time, there remains a need for further scientific substantiation of the mechanisms of psychological rehabilitation as a fundamental component of reintegration into civilian life. Particular attention should be paid to the standardization of post-isolation support, interdisciplinary cooperation, psychological support for family members of released persons, and the development of long-term models of socio-psychological adaptation.

Thus, the study of psychological rehabilitation of persons released from captivity has important scientific, social, and practical significance, as it aims to develop effective mechanisms for restoring mental

health, social adaptation, and full reintegration of individuals who have experienced the traumatic experience of captivity into civilian life and society.

Main Body. Captivity is accompanied not only by physical and psychological violence, but also by prolonged isolation, sensory deprivation, constant threat to life, loss of control over one's existence, forced submission, and destruction of the basic sense of safety, which forms a specific complex of psychotraumatic consequences.

Leading specialists in military and crisis psychology substantiate that the experience of captivity belongs to the most severe forms of extreme psychological traumatization and is characterized by a complex and long-term impact on an individual's mental health. At the same time, contemporary military psychology emphasizes that combat psychological trauma and captivity trauma differ in their nature, mechanisms of formation, and psychological consequences. While combat stress is mainly associated with experiencing danger during active hostilities, the experience of captivity is characterized by a prolonged state of total helplessness, dependence on the aggressor, psychological pressure, and systematic destruction of personal autonomy. Therefore, the consequences of captivity are more prolonged and complex and may manifest themselves in the form of post-traumatic stress disorders, anxiety and depressive conditions, impaired interpersonal interaction, identity crisis, emotional maladjustment, loss of trust in the social environment, and other profound psychological changes even long after release [2].

Therefore, the experience of captivity requires a separate comprehensive approach to psychological rehabilitation and post-isolation support, since its consequences differ significantly from other types of combat-related psychological trauma.

The analysis of regulatory guarantees of the right to psychological rehabilitation for persons released from captivity requires distinguishing between the categories of «psychological assistance» and «psychological rehabilitation». For persons released from captivity, psychological assistance may be provided immediately after release as crisis support, whereas psychological rehabilitation constitutes the subsequent, more comprehensive, and long-term stage of recovery. The analysis of the regulatory definition of the concept of «psychological assistance» provided in paragraph 1, part 1, article 1 of the basic Law of Ukraine «On the Mental Health Care System» dated 15 January 2025 [3] gives grounds to conclude that among the actions constituting such assistance are also actions aimed at restoring mental health, that is, directly psychological rehabilitation. Therefore, in the contemporary reintegration system, the phrase «psychological assistance and psychological rehabilitation of persons released from captivity» is frequently used.

Within the framework of this study, psychological assistance is considered as a general category, whereas psychological rehabilitation is viewed as a separate complex of restorative measures in the field of healthcare and mental health care. Such an understanding also corresponds to the regulatory approach.

The Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine dated 29 November 2022 «Certain Issues of Providing Psychological Assistance to War Veterans, Their Family Members, and Certain Other Categories of Persons» formulates the legal definition according to which «psychological rehabilitation is an activity aimed at restoring and supporting an individual's functioning in the physical, emotional, intellectual, social, and spiritual spheres through the use of methods of psychological and psychotherapeutic assistance in the form of psychotherapy, psychological counseling, first psychological aid, crisis psychological intervention...» [4].

Thus, psychological rehabilitation is one of the forms of assistance in the field of mental health aimed at restoring mental health, social functioning, and adaptive capabilities of an individual after the impact of psychotraumatic factors, in this case - captivity.

The right of persons released from captivity to psychological rehabilitation is guaranteed by the special Law of Ukraine «On Social and Legal Protection of Persons Recognized as Having Been Deprived of Personal Liberty as a Result of Armed Aggression against Ukraine, and Their Family Members» dated 26 January 2022, namely: «Persons recognized as having been deprived of personal liberty as a result of armed aggression against Ukraine shall, after their release, be provided with: 1) medical and rehabilitative assistance, including psychological assistance, as well as social and professional adaptation in accordance with the procedure established by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine...» [5].

The procedure, forms, and peculiarities of psychological rehabilitation for such categories of persons (released civilians and released defenders of Ukraine) are primarily regulated by Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 296 dated 15 March 2024 [6], which provides for primary psychodiagnostic assessment, development of an individual psychological support plan, post-isolation decompression, preparation for return to family life, and comprehensive psychosocial recovery, while defining decompression (post-isolation) as the primary form of psychological rehabilitation.

The primary form of psychological rehabilitation of released persons is aimed at stabilizing the psycho-emotional and physiological condition after the experience of forced isolation, restoring a sense of safety, predictability, and control over one's environment. This set of measures involves creating conditions for gradual and safe processing of traumatic experiences, including repeated reconstruction of personal history in a constructive and resource-oriented context, individually controlled recollection of the circumstances of captivity, and the formation of further adaptive strategies. Important components of this process include preparing the individual for interaction with the media, restoring family and social ties, reintegration into professional and military environments, ensuring access to social, legal, psychological, and spiritual support according to the individual needs of the released person, as well as determining further measures of long-term support after completion of the reintegration period.

Further detailed regulation by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, the Ministry of Defense of Ukraine, and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine was provided regarding the procedures for reintegration measures specifically for released defenders of Ukraine, including approved procedures for organizing reintegration measures and standard protocols for reintegration and post-isolation decompression [7–9].

Post-isolation decompression for a released defender of Ukraine consists of mandatory and variable components.

Mandatory decompression measures conducted with all released defenders of Ukraine primarily include assessment of their mental state and identification of persons requiring urgent (crisis) psychological assistance. Subsequently, psychodiagnostic examination using valid psychometric methods and ICT technologies is conducted. The next stage of psychological rehabilitation includes group psychoeducational sessions and individual psychological consultations aimed at resolving individual psychological and/or socio-psychological problems and identifying resources for post-traumatic growth. Final screening is conducted at the last stage.

Depending on the identified psycho-emotional condition, rehabilitation requests, and individual needs of released defenders, variable post-isolation decompression measures are implemented, involving phased application of psychological, psychotherapeutic, socio-communicative, and adaptive interventions. In particular, at the initial stage (first day), first psychological aid is provided to stabilize the psycho-emotional state, restore a sense of safety, and minimize acute stress reactions.

Work is also carried out with family members of released defenders of Ukraine (with their consent), including establishing communication with close relatives, informing them about the peculiarities of the reintegration process, defining the role of the family in the recovery process, and obtaining additional information regarding the individual psychological characteristics of released persons.

Variable measures also include group trainings on psychological relief and emotional stabilization aimed at reducing psycho-emotional tension, normalizing emotional reactions, and creating a supportive social environment. Individual and/or group low-intensity psychological interventions are implemented with the aim of safely processing traumatic experiences, restoring emotional and cognitive well-being, and providing counseling support to overcome behavioral practices posing risks to mental health, including alcohol or psychoactive substance use, and promoting healthy lifestyle skills.

Psychological interventions of medium and high intensity are conducted using recommended psychotherapeutic methods aimed at overcoming stress-associated mental and behavioral disorders caused by participation in hostilities, captivity, traumatic injuries, or other extreme circumstances. At the final stage (days 14–20), post-traumatic growth trainings are conducted, along with preparation of released defenders of Ukraine for further military service, return to family and social environments, interaction with media representatives, and further social reintegration.

Upon discharge of a released defender of Ukraine from a reintegration center or healthcare institution, the psychologist who provided psychological support during the reintegration measures formulates and provides recommendations regarding further post-isolation support or, where appropriate, referral for specialized psychological assistance of a higher level.

Within the framework of this study, it is also advisable to analyze recent changes in special legislation regarding the regulation of the primary purpose of providing psychological assistance to war veterans, their family members, and certain other categories of persons. In particular, in 2025 amendments were introduced supplementing the purpose of psychological assistance with the category of «post-traumatic growth of the individual» and excluding the provision regarding «prevention of disability».

In our opinion, such changes indicate a significant transformation of the contemporary state approach to mental health and psychological rehabilitation, particularly under conditions of martial law and large-scale psychological traumatization of the population.

First and foremost, this change reflects a transition from a predominantly medical and compensatory model of psychological assistance toward a person-centered and resource-oriented model of mental health support. Whereas the previous version of the norm focused mainly on minimizing negative consequences of psychological trauma, preventing mental disorders, and avoiding disability, the new version substantially expands the substantive understanding of psychological assistance, orienting it not only toward restoration of impaired functions but also toward the development of the individual's adaptive potential.

The inclusion of the category of «post-traumatic growth» in the regulatory framework of psychological rehabilitation is consistent with contemporary international approaches in the field of mental health, according to which traumatic experience is regarded not only as a factor of destruction but also as a potential source of positive personal transformation provided that adequate psychological support and assistance are ensured.

The fundamental provisions of the concept of Post-Traumatic Growth (PTG), developed by Richard Tedeschi and Lawrence Calhoun, consist in positive psychological transformation of personality resulting from experiencing and overcoming an extreme life crisis or traumatic event. In this context, post-traumatic growth should be understood as a process of positive personal changes following traumatic experience of forced isolation, manifested through increased psychological resilience, reconsideration of life values, restoration of subjectivity, enhanced capacity for social adaptation, formation of new meaning-oriented life perspectives, and development of crisis coping skills.

This concept acquires particular relevance under conditions of full-scale war when a significant number of individuals experience prolonged psychotraumatic influence. In the context of reintegration of persons released from captivity, such regulatory transformation is of special importance because it orients the system of psychological assistance not only toward stabilization of the psycho-emotional condition of the individual but also toward restoration of life activity, social functioning, adaptive resources, and the ability for further personal development.

Lorna Collier, while studying post-traumatic growth as one of the effective approaches in psychological rehabilitation of American veterans seeking recovery after combat stress, rightly notes that it should not be equated with resilience, since these are different categories [10]. A person who is already resilient to trauma will not experience post-traumatic growth because a resilient individual is not deeply shaken by the event and does not require the search for a new system of beliefs. Less resilient individuals, by contrast, may experience suffering and confusion while trying to understand why such a terrible event happened to them and what it means for their worldview.

To assess whether a person has achieved post-traumatic growth and to what extent, the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory developed by Tedeschi and Calhoun is most commonly used. According to its developers, positive reactions should be examined in five areas:

- Appreciation of life;
- Relationships with others;
- New possibilities in life;
- Personal strength;
- Spiritual change [11].

Considering the above, we believe that post-traumatic growth should be regarded as a potentially possible outcome of rehabilitation rather than a guaranteed or mandatory consequence of trauma.

Under contemporary conditions, psychological rehabilitation should be regarded as a comprehensive multi-level process aimed at restoring mental health, social functioning, adaptive potential, and personal subjectivity after traumatic experience. In the context of persons released from captivity, psychological rehabilitation acquires particular specificity because the consequences of forced isolation are characterized by a high level of psychological traumatization, prolonged stress impact, and complexity of post-traumatic manifestations.

Accordingly, the state reintegration system must ensure an individualized and person-centered approach to each person released from captivity.

The system of psychological rehabilitation for persons released from captivity should include:

- crisis psychological assistance;
- psychological decompression;
- psychodiagnostics;
- psychotherapeutic support;
- socio-psychological adaptation;
- family counseling;

- long-term psychosocial support;
- measures for prevention of PTSD and suicidal behavior.

Conclusions and Prospects for Further Research. Psychological rehabilitation of persons released from captivity constitutes a fundamental component of the contemporary state reintegration system and an important element of ensuring national security, social stability, and restoration of the human potential of the state.

It has been established that captivity is accompanied by significant psychotraumatic impact, which determines the necessity for comprehensive, long-term, and interagency psychological support for released persons.

The contemporary regulatory framework in the field of psychological rehabilitation is gradually forming a systematic mechanism of post-isolation recovery; however, it still requires further improvement regarding interagency coordination, standardization of psychological assistance, ensuring accessibility of services, and development of a network of specialized rehabilitation centers.

Effective state reintegration policy should be based on the principles of person-centeredness, continuity of assistance, trauma-informed approach, multidisciplinary interaction, and long-term psychosocial support.

A promising direction for further scholarly research involves developing models of institutional support for psychological rehabilitation of persons released from captivity, mechanisms for evaluating the effectiveness of rehabilitation programs, and adaptation of international experience in post-isolation support to the conditions of Ukraine.

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