

Vadym Podorozhnyi

Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University
Doctor of philosophy, Senior lecturer (Ukraine)

vadym.podorozhnyi@vspu.edu.ua

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-0004-6853

Serhii Ivanov

Vinnitsia Mykhailo Kotsiubynskyi State Pedagogical University
Student of the Department of psychology and social work (Ukraine)

ivanov2025serhii@gmail.com

ORCID ID: 0009-0008-7261-7479

THEORETICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CONCEPT OF COHESION IN THE CONTEXT OF MILITARY FORMATIONS

Анотація: У статті розглянуто теоретичний аналіз поняття згуртованості у контексті військових формувань. Згуртованість є ключовим фактором, що впливає на ефективність функціонування військових підрозділів, їхню здатність до взаємодії, виконання бойових завдань і підтримки психологічної стійкості військовослужбовців. Автор проводить огляд класичних теорій групової динаміки, зокрема праць Л. Фестінгера, Д. Картрайта та К. Левіна, які заклали фундаментальні підходи до розуміння цього феномену.

У роботі визначено основні складові групової згуртованості: емоційна, інструментальна та соціальна. Показано, як ці аспекти взаємодіють і формують ефективну групову взаємодію у військових колективах. Особливу увагу приділено специфіці згуртованості у військових формуваннях, яка формується під впливом суворої дисципліни, спільних цінностей, довіри та взаємної підтримки в умовах високого стресу.

На основі аналізу сучасних досліджень виокремлено фактори, що сприяють розвитку згуртованості у військових групах: роль лідерства, важливість групових норм, вплив колективного досвіду та тренувань. У статті також розглянуто основні перешкоди для формування згуртованості, зокрема конфлікти, низький рівень довіри чи погане керівництво.

Дослідження показує, що згуртованість у військових формуваннях має вирішальне значення для підтримки ефективності та психологічного благополуччя особового складу. Висновки можуть бути корисними для розробки програм підготовки військовослужбовців, що сприятимуть формуванню згуртованих і психологічно стійких підрозділів.

Ключові слова: згуртованість, групово динаміка, військові формування, психологічна стійкість, групово взаємодія.

Abstract: The article considers a theoretical analysis of the concept of cohesion in the context of military formations. Cohesion is a key factor affecting the effectiveness of the functioning of military units, their ability to interact, perform combat missions and maintain the psychological stability of servicemen. The author reviews classical theories of group dynamics, in particular the works of L. Festinger, D. Cartwright and K. Levin, who laid the fundamental approaches to understanding this phenomenon.

The paper identifies the main components of group cohesion: emotional, instrumental and social. It shows how these aspects interact and form effective group interaction in military teams. Particular attention is paid to the specificity of cohesion in military formations, which is formed under the influence of strict discipline, common values, trust and mutual support in conditions of high stress.

Based on the analysis of modern research, factors that contribute to the development of cohesion in military groups are identified: the role of leadership, the importance of group norms, the influence of collective experience and training. The article also examines the main obstacles to the formation of cohesion, in particular conflicts, low levels of trust or poor leadership.

The study shows that cohesion in military formations is crucial for maintaining the effectiveness and psychological well-being of personnel. The findings can be useful for developing military training programs that will contribute to the formation of cohesive and psychologically resilient units.

Keywords: cohesion, group dynamics, military formations, psychological resilience, group interaction.

Introduction: The problem of group cohesion is one of the central issues in modern psychology. Cohesion in military formations has a specific character, as it is generated in structures with a strict hierarchy and conditions of high stress. In the light of current challenges, the study of the causes and mechanisms of cohesion is usually applied in the context of joint combat missions and psychological resilience of soldiers. The concept of cohesion is one of the key factors in the functioning of military formations. Not only the effectiveness of combat missions, but also the psychological state of the group members and their ability to cooperate for a long time depend on cohesion.

The purpose of the article is to provide a theoretical analysis of the concept of cohesion, its structure and its specificity in the context of military formations.

Theoretical basis of the study: Cohesion in psychology is usually seen as a complex process that occurs in a group as a result of the interaction of its members. It is manifested in shared values, goals, and guidelines that ensure its unity and effectiveness. For example, in the studies of T. Newcomb and M. Sheriff, cohesion is seen as a product of group norms and mutual trust between members. In addition, practice in military units demonstrates that cohesion is achieved through joint training, which creates common standards of behaviour and supports psychological resilience.

L. Festinger, one of the founders of the concept of cohesion, defined it as a force that holds group members together and motivates them to stay in the group. He emphasised the importance of the group's attractiveness to its members and their satisfaction from participating in joint activities [3].

D. Cartwright and A. Zander complemented this concept by considering cohesion as a dynamic process based on meeting the individual needs of group members and achieving common goals. In their opinion, the higher the level of mutual support and trust, the stronger the group becomes [2].

K. Levin, in turn, emphasised the role of group norms and structures in the formation of cohesion. He believed that cohesion is the result of interaction between individuals in the context of common goals and values. His 'field of forces' theory focused on the influence of external and internal factors on group dynamics [6].

Let us consider the structure of group cohesion:

1. Emotional cohesion: reflects the psychological climate in the group, including the level of mutual support, trust between group members and the ability to empathise with each other. This aspect is key to building positive relationships in the group and maintaining morale.

2. Instrumental cohesion: is based on joint activities to achieve certain goals. It involves effective cooperation, distribution of roles and responsibilities, and an awareness of the importance of each member's individual contribution to the overall success.

3. Social cohesion: is formed through the adoption of common norms, values and standards of behaviour. It ensures the unity of the group, helps to minimise conflicts and creates conditions for the long-term functioning of the group.

Cohesion in the context of military formations has its own specifics and features, which are determined by the psychological conditions of military service. The psychological conditions that affect cohesion in military formations include

- Extreme conditions: Military formations often operate in high-risk environments that require soldiers to react quickly, dedicate themselves and cooperate. Extreme situations, such as combat, natural disasters or other dangerous conditions, can either strengthen bonds between group members or break them down, depending on the level of psychological preparedness and mutual trust.

- Stressful situations and their impact on interaction: The constant presence of stress associated with military tasks can both contribute to cohesion and have a negative impact. Under stressful conditions, it is important that group members have sufficient psychological support and the ability to work as a team. Stress can increase the sense of collective cohesion if people are able to support each other, or it can cause divisions if mistrust or conflict arises.

- Motivation and sense of group responsibility: Motivation, both individual and collective, is a key factor for cohesion. A high level of group responsibility can create a strong sense of unity when each soldier understands his or her role in the success of the collective. A sense of duty to others, a common purpose and shared experiences can significantly boost morale and collective spirit.

It is interesting and important for a comprehensive analysis of the concept of cohesion to compare cohesion in military and civilian groups. Let us consider this comparison in more detail:

1. The purpose and context of the activity:

— Military groups: The purpose is a combat order that is related to the fulfilment of combat or strategic tasks. Group cohesion in military formations is focused on maximising effectiveness in difficult and dangerous environments, often under extreme stress and risk to life.

— Civilian groups: The purpose is usually related to the achievement of business, social or personal goals that do not always have critical consequences. In civilian groups, cohesion is formed on the basis of common interests, professional tasks or personal connections, and is often less reinforced by stressful situations.

2. Extreme conditions and stress:

— Military groups: Constant stress and extreme conditions (combat, high danger, limited resources) are an integral part of the military experience. This can strengthen the bonds between soldiers, but also increases the risk of mental overload, trauma or conflict.

— Civilian groups: Stress in civilian groups is usually not as high. Pressures and tensions can occur in business environments or in personal relationships, but they are usually less extreme, which can lead to less intense cohesion.

3. Roles and hierarchy:

— Military groups: Clearly structured with a hierarchy where everyone has a defined role. This allows for order and discipline to be maintained, which is important for achieving common goals. Roles are more formalised, which can help in crisis situations.

— Civilian groups: Roles in civilian groups are often more flexible and can change depending on the situation. The hierarchy may be less strict and, depending on the culture of the organisation, the level of formalism may be much lower. This allows more group members to be equal participants in the decision-making process.

4. Motivation and commitment:

— Military groups: Motivation is mainly formed on the basis of collective responsibility, duty to the nation, fellow soldiers and the institution of the army. Military personnel often have a high level of commitment to their fellow soldiers and to the mission, as the lives of others may depend on it.

— Civilian groups: Motivation in civilian groups is often based on personal goals, career advancement, financial rewards or social interests. Commitment is usually lower than in military formations, although in some cases (e.g. in creative or charitable groups) it can be very high.

5. Group dynamics:

— Military groups: In military groups, cohesion is often built on shared experiences, both positive (successes in operations) and negative (losses, hardships). This helps to create a strong sense of unity. Cohesion can be quite monolithic due to collective experiences.

— Civilian groups: Group dynamics in civilian groups are often more flexible, allowing for individuality. However, in some cases, cohesion may be less stable if group members have different interests or conflicts.

6. Conflicts and their resolution:

— Military groups: Conflicts in such groups can be dangerous due to rigid hierarchies and high tensions, and often require immediate intervention by commanders. However, these conflicts can be resolved quickly if there are clear rules and structure.

— Civilian groups: In civilian groups, conflicts can be less intense but also more protracted, as there is not as much external discipline. It depends more on the culture of interaction and the group's ability to compromise.

7. Emotional climate and psychological state:

— Military groups: There is often a strong emotional bond based on shared experiences, but there may also be signs of stress, trauma or emotional exhaustion due to the constant threat to life.

— Civilian groups: The emotional climate depends on the nature of the group, but it is usually more stable, although not as cohesive due to the lower intensity of shared experiences [1].

To summarise, cohesion in military groups is characterised by a high degree of discipline, hierarchy and responsibility, which is critical to achieving military objectives. It is often formed under the influence of extreme situations and is resilient due to strong motivation and shared experiences. In civilian groups, cohesion is usually more flexible, with less discipline and hierarchy, but often built on softer, social or professional motivations. Depending on the context, the role and impact of cohesion in these groups can vary greatly.

Cohesion in military units has its own specificities due to factors that are unique to the military environment. Among them are:

1. High level of discipline and chain of command: In military groups, cohesion is highly dependent on the observance of strict discipline and chain of command. This ensures clarity in the execution of orders and minimises the risk of chaos in extreme situations.
2. Shared experience of extreme conditions: Participation in combat operations, training and other extreme situations contributes to the formation of deep interpersonal bonds based on trust and mutual assistance.
3. Psychological support and adaptation: cohesion in military formations also includes the ability to maintain morale, help fellow soldiers overcome stress and adapt to difficult conditions of service.
4. Common purpose and mission: a clear understanding of the overall goal, such as national security or a combat mission, is an important factor that unites military personnel.
5. Identification with the group: members of military formations often identify with the unit, which contributes to a sense of pride in belonging to the group and increases cohesion.

Important for analysing the concept of cohesion in the context of military formations are the factors that shape cohesion in military groups. The formation of cohesion in military units is determined by both objective and subjective factors:

Objective factors:

1. Conditions of service and activity:
 - Extreme situations: Participation in combat operations or performing difficult tasks in dangerous conditions contributes to cohesion, as servicemen often share common experiences, which strengthens their bonds.
 - Working hours and living conditions: it is important to organise everyday life, provide basic needs, and clearly define the working hours to help the military focus on a common goal.
2. The role of hierarchy and command structure:
 - Command and unit structure: A clear hierarchy and defined roles within a unit provide order and discipline, which are the basis for cohesion. Leadership must maintain morale and provide effective direction during operations.
 - Training and Exercise: Collective training in a simulated combat environment strengthens the bonds between soldiers, building cooperation and support.
3. Joint experience:
 - Shared trials and achievements: Shared experiences, both positive (successes in operations) and negative (losses, difficulties), are important for cohesion. This helps to create a sense of solidarity and shared responsibility.
4. Physical conditions of service:
 - Working and living conditions: when troops live in the same conditions, share the same provisions and follow the same regime, it stimulates interaction and a sense of unity.

Subjective factors include:

1. Motivation and personal commitment:
 - High motivation: Soldiers who are highly motivated to serve and fulfil their mission tend to be more committed to their group and unit, which strengthens cohesion.
 - Sense of duty: A sense of duty to fellow soldiers, country and society creates additional motivation for cohesion and unity.
2. Psychological and emotional factors:
 - Mutual trust and support: cohesion is largely dependent on the level of trust between unit members. Mutual support in difficult situations helps to create a positive psychological atmosphere.
 - Emotional climate: openness in communication, empathy and support can strengthen the psychological bonds between group members.
3. Psychological preparation and resilience:
 - Psychological Preparation for Extreme Situations: Preparing soldiers for stressful environments and developing resilience helps them maintain stability and effectiveness in critical situations, which affects cohesion.
 - The ability to self-regulate and adapt: jointly overcoming difficulties increases the emotional resilience of units.
4. Individual relationships and communication:

— Positive interpersonal relationships: when soldiers have good relationships with each other, it contributes to cohesion. Mutual respect, empathy and the ability to communicate constructively help to overcome possible conflicts.

— Leadership and engagement: A unit leader who is able to effectively communicate and support his unit is crucial for cohesion.

5. Group culture and collective identity:

— Shared values and ideas: when all members of a group share common ideals and values, it helps them to form a strong collective identity and cohesion.

— Group Identification: Service personnel often identify with a unit or service, which strengthens a sense of brotherhood and unity. Corporate culture and PR (affiliation with the «3rd Assault (Tretia shturmova)» or «Madiar Birds (Ptahy Madiara)»).

In summary, cohesion in military groups is determined by the interaction of objective and subjective factors. Objective factors, such as conditions of service and training, contribute to the basic conditions for cohesion, while subjective factors, such as psychological training, motivation and personal relationships, determine the depth and sustainability of cohesion.

The cohesion of a military unit has a direct and significant impact on its effectiveness. A high level of group cohesion increases combat readiness, psychological stability and the ability to perform complex tasks. Let's take a closer look at this [8].

Dependence of combat effectiveness on the level of group cohesion. The combat effectiveness of a unit directly depends on the level of cohesion among its members. When soldiers interact well with each other, have a high level of trust and support, they are able to make decisions faster, act in a coordinated and effective manner. This is especially important in stressful and extreme situations, when each member must trust not only his or her own skills, but also those of fellow soldiers.

Key aspects of the impact of cohesion on combat effectiveness include:

— Speed of reaction and decision-making: cohesive groups are able to act quickly and cohesively, which is critical in combat operations. Mutual trust allows group members to worry less about their own safety and focus more on achieving a common goal.

— Reduced likelihood of error: In groups with a high level of cohesion, the likelihood of error is reduced as soldiers interact and support each other more, share information and help when needed.

— Improved morale: Higher morale in cohesive units allows them to effectively withstand difficult conditions while maintaining a fighting spirit and the will to complete the task to the end.

Psychological resilience is a critical factor in military service, especially in conditions of stress, combat and high risk to life. Unit cohesion helps to build resilience in military personnel for several reasons:

— Mutual support and emotional support: high cohesion allows soldiers to support each other on an emotional level, which helps them cope with the worries, stress and losses during combat.

— Shared experience: The joint experience of difficult situations, both combat operations and everyday difficulties, contributes to the development of psychological resilience. Soldiers who have experienced difficult situations together usually have a better ability to adapt to stressful conditions.

— Reducing the risk of psychological trauma: in close-knit groups, soldiers are more likely to turn to their comrades for help, which reduces the likelihood of developing psychological trauma such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) [7].

Studies have shown the importance and significance of cohesion for the combat effectiveness and psychological resilience of units in general and soldiers in particular. Here are some examples:

— Studies of military units in combat: a study conducted among US Army units during the Iraq War showed that units with high levels of cohesion had significantly better combat effectiveness and fewer casualties than those with low cohesion. The high level of mutual support and trust allowed groups to respond more quickly to combat situations, reducing stress and improving performance.

— Cases at the level of special forces: In special forces, such as the Green Berets or the British SAS, cohesion is a key factor for mission success. Members of such units undergo special training that focuses on developing psychological resilience and cohesion, enabling them to perform complex tasks in extreme conditions.

— Research in peacekeeping missions: military peacekeepers often work in international units with people from different countries. Studies show that increased cohesion in such units helps to overcome cultural and language barriers, which significantly improves the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions.

It is worth noting that cohesion increases combat effectiveness, allows units to act more coherently, make decisions more quickly and ensures high morale. Cohesion also contributes to psychological resilience, helping soldiers to overcome stress, support each other in extreme conditions and reduce the risk of psychological trauma, which is supported by practical research that shows that a high level of cohesion is an important factor for success in combat operations and peacekeeping missions. In general, the cohesion of a military unit is a key factor affecting its combat effectiveness and psychological resilience. Therefore, it is important to invest in developing this quality during training and in the course of service.

However, to analyze the issue of cohesion in the context of military formations, it is also important to consider the problems and challenges in forming the cohesion of military collectives.

The formation of cohesion of military collectives is a complex and long-term process in which various problems and challenges arise. Below, we will consider the main barriers, psychological consequences of low cohesion and factors that can destroy cohesion in the army.

1. Barriers to cohesion:

Conflicts: military collectives, like any other groups, can face conflicts between members. This can be the result of personality differences, different views or problems in interaction between military personnel. Conflicts can arise due to:

- Differences in character and attitude to service: Individual differences in approaches to performing tasks can lead to tension.

- Incoherence in actions: The lack of a single strategy or misunderstanding in work during joint operations can cause conflicts.

Mistrust: Mistrust among soldiers is one of the biggest barriers to cohesion. It can arise from:

- Insufficient communication: When information is not communicated openly and in a timely manner, it creates an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust.

- Uncertainty in mission execution: When soldiers do not know how a mission will be accomplished or do not trust their comrades, it contributes to the emergence of doubts.

Communication problems: Ineffective communication between unit members can significantly reduce the level of cohesion. The reasons for this are:

- Lack of clear communication: In a military environment, rapid and accurate communication is essential to the success of the mission, and its absence can lead to confusion and misunderstandings.

- Inadequate leadership: When commanders are unable to communicate correctly and effectively with subordinates, this can lead to problems in interaction and a decrease in trust within the group.

Analyzing the psychological consequences of low cohesion among military personnel in military formations, the following can be distinguished:

Low cohesion creates stressful conditions for military personnel. They may feel isolated or left without support at critical moments, which causes: psychological exhaustion (lack of support and a sense of loneliness in battle increases stress); uncertainty (when military personnel do not feel unity in the group, this can cause anxiety, doubts and reduce the ability to focus on the task).

Low cohesion also leads to disorganization. which is expressed in: low discipline (when there is no unity in the unit, it is difficult to maintain discipline, which can lead to chaos during operations and disorganized actions (soldiers can act autonomously, without clear coordination with others, which reduces the effectiveness and safety of the unit).

Morale is one of the main factors determining the effectiveness of the unit. A low level of cohesion leads to: undermining motivation (when soldiers do not feel support from their comrades or commander, their motivation to complete tasks decreases) and loss of faith in the team (if individuals do not have a sense of brotherhood and mutual responsibility, this can reduce their commitment to the service and tasks and lead to desertion (unauthorized abandonment of the unit)) [11].

We also analyzed the factors that reduce the level of cohesion in military formations. Among them, we identified: individualism, loss of motivation and ineffective leadership. Let's consider them in more detail more:

Individualism is the tendency for individuals to work for themselves or to view their role in the military in terms of their own interests rather than the collective. This can be destructive of cohesion, as if soldiers are focused only on their own interests, it can lead to a lack of mutual support and ineffective interaction, and individualism is often accompanied by a lack of coordination and interaction, which reduces efficiency and cohesion.

Loss of motivation among soldiers is another significant factor that destroys cohesion. The reasons for the loss of motivation can be different: uncertainty about the future (if soldiers do not understand why they are performing tasks or do not see the goals, this can lead to a decrease in the desire to work towards achieving common goals); low assessment of leadership (if soldiers do not see support or proper leadership, this reduces their motivation to actively participate in the activities of the unit).

Inadequate or ineffective leadership can be a major cause of the destruction of cohesion in the military team: if the commander cannot clearly define the tasks for subordinates, this leads to confusion and a lack of cohesion, and commanders who cannot effectively manage stressful situations can create an atmosphere of tension, which also reduces the level of cohesion.

Conclusions and prospects for further research: Cohesion in military formations is a complex, multidimensional phenomenon that includes emotional, instrumental and social aspects. It plays a key role in maintaining combat effectiveness and psychological resilience of military personnel. The formation of cohesion in military units faces various barriers, such as conflicts, mistrust and communication problems. Low cohesion has serious psychological consequences, including stress, disorganization and low morale. Factors that destroy cohesion include individualism, loss of motivation and ineffective leadership. To maintain and strengthen cohesion, it is important to work on the development of communication, interaction, support and effective leadership in the unit. Research into the factors and mechanisms of cohesion is an important direction for optimizing the work of military units and increasing their effectiveness in extreme operating conditions.

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