

PSYCHOLOGICAL REHABILITATION OF VETERANS INVOLVING WEAPONS TRAINING

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Annotation. The article addresses the issue of psychological rehabilitation of combat veterans in the context of prolonged armed conflict and the growing number of individuals who have experienced war-related psychological trauma. Special attention is given to the use of weapon-based training as a supportive rehabilitative tool within a comprehensive system of psychological assistance. The main psychological consequences of combat experience are analyzed, including post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic anxiety, emotional instability, aggression, impaired self-regulation, and difficulties in veterans' social adaptation to civilian life. The relevance of implementing controlled weapon-based training in the rehabilitation process is substantiated as a means of restoring a sense of personal control, inner balance, and confidence in one's actions. The psychological mechanisms underlying the positive impact of such training are identified, including somatic regulation, reduction of psycho-emotional tension, transformation of destructive aggression into socially acceptable forms, and restoration of professional and personal identity of veterans. Emphasis is placed on the importance of adhering to safety principles, voluntary participation, an individual approach, and mandatory professional supervision by psychologists and certified instructors. It is concluded that weapon-based training can serve as an effective supplementary component of psychological rehabilitation for veterans when integrated with traditional psychotherapeutic methods.

Key words: psychological rehabilitation, combat veterans, post-traumatic stress disorder, war-related trauma, weapon-based training, psycho-emotional regulation, social adaptation, military identity.

1. Introduction.

Contemporary armed conflicts, particularly the full-scale war in Ukraine, have caused a sharp increase in the number of combat veterans who require effective psychological rehabilitation. Combat experience is often accompanied by the development of post-traumatic stress disorder, chronic anxiety, depressive states, increased aggression, and social adaptation disorders. Despite the availability of traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, a significant portion of veterans do not achieve the expected therapeutic effect due to the failure to account for the specifics of military experience and established military identity. In this context, the need for alternative and supplementary psychological rehabilitation methods becomes urgent—methods that would combine psychotherapeutic intervention with activities that are comprehensible and acceptable to veterans. One such method is the use of controlled weapons training in the rehabilitation process. However, insufficient theoretical development, limited research, and the absence of unified methodological recommendations necessitate thorough scientific analysis of the possibilities and limitations of applying this approach.

2. Analysis of research and publications.

The problem of psychological rehabilitation of combat veterans is widely represented in the works of domestic and foreign researchers who focus on studying post-traumatic stress disorder, mechanisms of psychotrauma, and pathways to restoring the mental health of military personnel. Scientific research has substantiated the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy, exposure methods, group psychotherapy,

art therapy, body-oriented approaches, and psychoeducational methods. Some scientific works are devoted to the use of physical activity, sports training, and military-applied exercises as means of reducing anxiety and aggression levels in veterans. However, the question of using weapons training in the context of psychological rehabilitation remains fragmentarily covered and is mostly considered within applied or experimental programs. The psychological mechanisms of influence of such training, conditions for their safe use, and integration with classical psychotherapeutic methods remain insufficiently studied, which defines the scientific novelty of this problematic.

3. The purpose of this article is to provide theoretical justification and analysis of the possibilities of using controlled weapons training as a supplementary means of psychological rehabilitation for combat veterans.

4. Main content.

The problem of psychological rehabilitation of combat veterans acquires special urgency in conditions of prolonged armed conflict and significant growth in the number of persons who have experienced combat psychotrauma. Veterans' return to peaceful life is accompanied by complex psychological adaptation processes, often complicated by post-traumatic stress disorder, increased anxiety, aggression, self-regulation disorders, and loss of feelings of social and personal fulfillment. In this context, the state is obligated to ensure effective mechanisms of psychological support and rehabilitation for veterans, particularly through the implementation of modern methods adapted to military experience.

The question of social protection and rehabilitation of veterans is regulated by a series of legal acts of Ukraine. Key among them is the Law of Ukraine "On the Status of War Veterans, Guarantees of Their Social Protection," which establishes veterans' right to medical, psychological, and social assistance. Within this law, psychological rehabilitation is recognized as a component of the state guarantee system aimed at restoring the physical and mental health of persons who participated in combat operations.

The Law of Ukraine "On Social Services" also has important significance, defining psychological assistance and rehabilitation as a type of social service that can be provided to veterans both individually and in group form. The law emphasizes principles of targeting, voluntariness, and comprehensiveness, creating legal grounds for using various forms of rehabilitation practices, including those combining psychological and activity-based components [1].

Subordinate regulatory acts play a separate role, particularly state programs on psychological rehabilitation of veterans approved by the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine, which provide for the implementation of comprehensive rehabilitation measures involving psychologists, psychotherapists, rehabilitation specialists, and other professionals. Within such programs, the use of innovative methods is permitted provided their safety and professional supervision [2].

Current Ukrainian legislation does not contain a direct prohibition on using weapons training for rehabilitation purposes, but establishes strict requirements regarding the circulation, storage, and use of weapons. According to legislation in the field of weapons circulation, any training involving their use is possible only in specially designated places (shooting ranges, training centers) and with the participation of certified instructors [3].

In the context of psychological rehabilitation, weapons training can be considered not as combat training, but as structured activity with therapeutic potential. Such classes can include shooting in controlled conditions, concentration training, breathing techniques, movement and emotion control. From a legal perspective, they can be integrated into rehabilitation programs as a variety of physical or psychophysiological activity that promotes the restoration of mental balance [4, p. 22].

From a psychological perspective, weapons training can perform several important rehabilitation functions. First, they promote restoration of the sense of control, which is often lost as a result of psychotraumatic

experience. Clear regulation of actions, safety rules, and concentration on the process help reduce the level of anxiety and internal tension. Second, such classes promote somatic regulation, as they combine physical activity with psychoemotional self-regulation. Third, controlled use of weapons allows transformation of aggressive impulses into a socially acceptable and safe form, which is especially important for veterans with elevated excitement levels. An important aspect is also the restoration of military identity in a positive, non-traumatic format. For many veterans, weapons are a symbol of professional experience, not exclusively a source of traumatic memories. With professional psychological support, this can promote integration of combat experience into a holistic life story [5, p. 226].

However, the use of weapons training in rehabilitation programs requires strict adherence to legal and ethical norms. Mandatory principles include voluntary participation, preliminary psychological assessment of the veteran's condition, and exclusion of persons with high risk of destructive behavior. Legislative requirements regarding weapons circulation safety have unconditional priority, and responsibility for organizing classes is placed on authorized institutions and professionals [6, p. 194].

Analysis of Ukrainian legislation indicates that the psychological rehabilitation system for veterans has sufficient legal grounds for implementing comprehensive and innovative assistance methods. Weapons training, subject to clear legal regulation, professional supervision, and integration with traditional psychotherapeutic approaches, can serve as an effective supplementary tool for psychological rehabilitation of combat veterans. Further scientific research should be directed toward developing unified methodologies and regulatory recommendations for the safe application of such training in rehabilitation practice [7, p. 77].

In conditions of martial law, psychological rehabilitation of combat veterans is complicated by a number of objective and subjective problems. The main ones include overload of the mental health care system, shortage of qualified specialists, limited financial and material resources, and insufficient regulatory regulation of innovative rehabilitation methods. An additional challenge is the elevated level of psychoemotional tension among veterans caused by ongoing combat operations, repeated traumatization, and difficulty adapting to civilian life in conditions of instability. The use of weapons training as a supplementary rehabilitation means requires special caution due to increased security risks and the need for strict control over participants' mental state during martial law [8, p. 702].

Solutions to these problems include forming comprehensive state policy in the field of psychological rehabilitation of veterans, which would provide for clear legal regulation and standardization of rehabilitation programs, including those using weapons training. An important direction is the development of interdisciplinary cooperation between psychologists, rehabilitation specialists, medical workers, and certified instructors, as well as implementation of mandatory preliminary psychological diagnostics of program participants. Martial law conditions necessitate flexible forms of rehabilitation, particularly combining individual and group work, which allows ensuring a safe environment, promoting restoration of self-regulation, and reducing psychoemotional tension of veterans without violating safety requirements and current legislation.

5. Conclusions.

The conducted analysis demonstrates that psychological rehabilitation of combat veterans in conditions of martial law is one of the priority tasks of state policy in the field of mental health protection and social protection. Combat experience associated with prolonged exposure to life-threatening situations causes the development of post-traumatic stress disorder, emotional self-regulation disorders, and difficulties adapting to peaceful life, which requires comprehensive and differentiated approaches to rehabilitation.

The use of controlled weapons training as a supplementary element of psychological rehabilitation can have a positive therapeutic effect subject to compliance with legal, security, and ethical requirements. Such classes promote restoration of the sense of control, reduction of psychoemotional tension levels, formation of self-regulation skills, and integration of combat experience into a holistic system of the veteran's personal functioning. However, the effectiveness of this approach is possible only when integrated with traditional

psychotherapeutic methods, mandatory professional supervision, and preliminary psychological assessment of rehabilitation program participants.

Further scientific research should be directed toward developing standardized methodologies and regulatory recommendations for the safe application of weapons training in the psychological rehabilitation system for veterans in conditions of martial law.

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