

## POSITIVE RELIGIOUS COPING AS PREDICTOR OF POSTTRAUMATIC GROWTH OF VETERAN VOLUNTEERS OF THE RUSSIAN-UKRAINIAN WAR

### ПОЗИТИВНИЙ РЕЛІГІЙНИЙ КОПІНГ ЯК ПРЕДИКТОР ПОСТТРАВМАТИЧНОГО ЗРОСТАННЯ ДОБРОВОЛЬЦІВ – ВЕТЕРАНІВ РОСІЙСЬКО-УКРАЇНСЬКОЇ ВІЙНИ

*The purpose of the study is to reveal the content of the characteristics of positive religious coping as predictor of posttraumatic growth in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The sample of respondents consisted of 162 men – veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war, aged between 26 and 58 years. The empirical study was conducted during 2018-2023. Religious coping is defined as an appeal to religion when a person is experiencing life's difficulties, seeking social support in religious community. Religious coping includes different types of overcoming severe stressful events and crises: carried out through the relationship between man and God; through their own system of values, beliefs, intentions and actions; through communication with people of the same faith. The phenomenon of posttraumatic growth plays an important role in understanding the consequences of posttraumatic stress disorder. The posttraumatic growth is the experience of positive changes that occur with a person as a result of exposure to complex stressful events, serious traumatic situations, life crises. The following psychodiagnostic techniques were used in the empirical study: The Brief Religious Coping Scale (Brief-RCOPE, the authors: K. Pargament, M. Feuille, D. Burdzy); The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (the authors: R. Tedeschi, L. Calhoun); Hardiness Test (the author: S. Muddy); Mental Health Outcome Measures: Depression and Anxiety (BSI-12, the author: L. Derogatis). The following methods of statistical data analysis were used in the empirical study: Spearman's correlation coefficients and multiple regression analysis. Significant positive correlations between positive religious coping and hardiness, posttraumatic growth in veteran volunteers were identified. Significant negative correlations between positive religious coping in veteran volunteers and anxiety, depression were found. Positive religious coping, hardiness in veteran volunteers are significant predictors of their posttraumatic growth.*

**Key words:** *positive religious coping, posttraumatic growth, hardiness, veteran volunteers, Russian-Ukrainian war.*

*Мета дослідження полягає у виявленні особливостей позитивного релігійного*

*копінгу як предиктора посттравматичного зростання у добровольців – ветеранів російсько-української війни. Вибірку респондентів становили 162 чоловіки – добровольці – ветерани російсько-української війни віком від 26 до 58 років. Емпіричне дослідження було проведено протягом 2018–2023 рр. Релігійний копінг розглянуто як звернення до релігії під час переживання життєвих труднощів, пошуку соціальної підтримки в релігійній спільноті. Релігійний копінг включає різні практики подолання важких стресових подій і криз: через стосунки між особою і Богом; через власну систему цінностей, переконань, намірів і дій; через спілкування з членами своєї релігійної спільноти. Визначено, що феномен посттравматичного зростання відіграє важливу роль у розумінні наслідків посттравматичного стресового розладу. Посттравматичне зростання визначено як переживання позитивних змін, які відбуваються з особою в результаті впливу складних стресових подій, серйозних травматичних ситуацій, життєвих криз. В емпіричному дослідженні використано такі психодіагностичні методики: коротка версія шкали релігійного копінеу (Brief-RCOPE, автори: К. Pargament, M. Feuille, D. Burdzy); опитувальник посттравматичного зростання (R. Tedeschi, L. Calhoun); тест життєстійкості (S. Muddy); шкали депресії та тривоги (BSI-12, L. Derogatis). Використано такі методи статистичного аналізу даних: коефіцієнти кореляції Ч. Спірмена та множинний регресійний аналіз. Виявлено значущі явно виражені прямі кореляційні зв'язки позитивного релігійного копінеу з життєстійкістю, посттравматичним зростанням у добровольців-ветеранів. Виявлено значущі явно виражені зворотні кореляції позитивного релігійного копінеу з тривогою, депресією у добровольців-ветеранів. Позитивний релігійний копінг, життєстійкість у добровольців-ветеранів виступають значущими предикторами їх посттравматичного зростання.*

**Ключові слова:** *позитивний релігійний копінг, посттравматичне зростання, життєстійкість, добровольці-ветерани, російсько-українська війна.*

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**Formulation of the problem.** Due to the long-running Russian-Ukrainian war, the study of posttraumatic growth predictors is extremely important. This problem is especially relevant in connection with posttraumatic stress disorder caused by participation in hostilities.

Recent research has found significant correlation between the suicide and PTSD symptomatology of posttraumatic stress disorder [2].

In our opinion, the phenomenon of posttraumatic growth plays an important role in under-

standing the consequences of posttraumatic stress disorder.

The problem of determining the relationship between *religious coping*, and *posttraumatic growth* is insufficiently studied in psychology.

**The purpose of the study** is to reveal the content of the characteristics of positive religious coping as predictor of posttraumatic growth in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

**Presentation of the main research material.** In Ukrainian psychology, T. Tytarenko, V. Klim-

chuk, V. Gorbunova, O. Shelyug, D. Zubovskiy, I. Prykhodko and others *scholars* made a significant contribution to the development of the problem of post-traumatic growth. *Scholars* define posttraumatic growth as the experience of positive changes that occur with a person as a result of exposure to complex stressful events, serious traumatic situations, life crises.

The results of empirical research show that posttraumatic growth is manifested in a person in the growth of appreciation of life in general, the filling of relationships with meaning, the growth of a sense of personal strength, the enrichment of spiritual life, changing priorities [6, p. 2631].

According to many empirical studies, the concept of *religious coping* is used to analyze the processes of adaptation and sustainable coping with stress. Religious coping is defined by researchers as an appeal to religion when a person is experiencing life's difficulties, seeking social support in a group of people with one faith [15].

*Scholars view religious coping as an adaptive cognitive option that involves forms of thinking aimed at assessing difficulties compared to other life events* [14, p. 218].

Religious coping includes different types of overcoming severe stressful events and crises: carried out through the relationship between man and God; through their own system of values, beliefs, intentions and actions; through communication with people of the same faith [9; 13; 17; 18].

Empirical research shows that recourse to religious coping increases significantly in the event of a serious illness or approaching death [16, p. 49].

Many people choose religion as a coping strategy in the event of the loss of a loved one, which is accompanied by a reassessment of values.

*In our opinion, positive religious coping can help veteran volunteers in their posttraumatic growth.*

We formulated the following research hypotheses:

H1: Positive religious coping in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war is positively correlated with hardiness and *posttraumatic growth*.

H2: Positive religious coping, hardiness in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war are significant predictors of their *posttraumatic growth*.

In the empirical study, we used the following psychodiagnostic techniques:

1) The Brief Religious Coping Scale (Brief-RCOPE) (the authors: K. Pargament, M. Feuille, D. Burdzy). Positive religious coping and negative religious coping are the main scales of the psychodiagnostic technique.

2) The Posttraumatic Growth Inventory (the authors: R. Tedeschi, L. Calhoun). The scale measures the level of posttraumatic growth.

3) Hardiness Test (the author: S. Muddy). This psychodiagnostic technique is aimed at assessing the ability of the individual to cope with a stressful situation, while maintaining internal balance without reducing the success of life.

4) Mental Health Outcome Measures: Depression and Anxiety (BSI-12) (the author: L. R. Derogatis). This psychodiagnostic technique measures the level of depression and anxiety.

In order to process empirical data, we used the following methods of statistical data analysis: Spearman's correlation coefficients and multiple regression analysis. We used a statistical program IBM SPSS Statistics 21 Premium+AMOS.

Our empirical study was conducted during 2018-2023. The sample of respondents consisted of 162 men – veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war, aged between 26 and 58 years. Each respondent filled in all forms of psychodiagnostic techniques confidentially and individually.

Based on the correlation analysis of Spearman's correlation coefficient, significant positive correlations were empirically established between positive religious coping and hardiness, *posttraumatic growth* in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Significant negative correlations were found between positive religious coping and depression, anxiety in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war. The obtained correlations are presented in Table 1.

In order to empirically identify predictors of *posttraumatic growth*, we used multiple regression analysis. In the model of multiple regression analysis, we included *posttraumatic growth* as a dependent variable and positive religious coping, hardiness, depression and anxiety as independent variables. The results obtained are shown in Table 2.

It should be noted that the obtained regression model is statistically significant ( $p < 0,001$ ). This

Table 1

### The positive religious coping: Spearman's correlation coefficient

Variables	Spearman's correlation coefficient	Significance level
Anxiety	- 0,461	$p < 0,001$
Depression	- 0,512	$p < 0,001$
Posttraumatic growth	0,446	$p < 0,001$
Hardiness	0,531	$p < 0,001$

Table 2

**The posttraumatic growth: multiple regression analysis**

$R = 0,653$ ;  $R^2 = 0,426$ ;  $Adjusted R^2 = 0,409$   
 $F = 24,109$ ,  $p < 0,001$

Regression analysis model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	Indicator <i>t</i>	Indicator <i>p</i> level
	<i>B</i>	Standard error	<i>Beta</i>		
(Constant)	15,146	1,993		7,602	0,000 $p < 0,001$
Positive religious coping	0,347	0,057	0,314	4,360	0,000 $p < 0,001$
Hardiness	0,332	0,084	0,241	2,758	0,006 $p < 0,01$
Depression	-0,304	0,068	-0,265	-2,975	0,003 $p < 0,01$
Anxiety	-0,290	0,064	-0,268	-2,995	0,003 $p < 0,01$

model explains 43% of *posttraumatic growth* as a dependent variable.

The results show that positive religious coping and hardiness as independent variables have a significant positive effect on *posttraumatic growth* in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

As can be seen from the results, anxiety and depression inhibit *posttraumatic growth* in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war.

Religion is a source of consolation. D. Oman [12] notes that an individual's engagement in religion / spirituality may causally affect that individual's health through pathways that include health behaviors, social connections and support, ability to draw upon distinctively religious/spiritual methods of coping, and mental health. The results of Oman's study showed that religion / spirituality factors are also positively correlated with diverse health-related character strengths that include kindness, pro-sociality and hope [12, p. 51].

In our empirical study, positive significant correlation between positive religious coping and *posttraumatic growth* in veteran volunteers of the Russian-Ukrainian war draw attention. The more veteran volunteers are inclined to religious coping, the more they are prone to positive changes (growth of appreciation of life in general, filling of relations with meanings, growth of personal strength, change of values, enrichment of spiritual life).

Positive religious coping has significant therapeutic potential, preventive and rehabilitative value.

Our results are confirmed by the results of research by other *scholars*. Some studies [8; 9] show that religion and spirituality minimize *posttraumatic stress* responses and to facilitate *posttraumatic growth*. According to Keagy's research [5] *post-traumatic growth* is characterized by new paths, personal strength, appreciation, increased spirituality, and closer relationships.

C. Lehmann and E. Steele [9] point out that religion and spirituality provide coping resources that are associated with outcomes following a trauma, including *posttraumatic stress* and *posttraumatic growth*.

*The results of our study have demonstrated that there was positive significant correlation between positive religious coping and hardiness in veteran volunteers.*

Our results are consistent with the research of other *scholars*. Positive religious coping may be a significant protective factor from stressful events [2, p. 307]. In difficult life situations, people find comfort in their religious and spiritual beliefs [17, p. 59].

A. Mohammadzadeh and M. Najafi [11] point out that death anxiety, obsession, and depression constitute three dimensions of death distress which can be influenced by religious coping in religious individuals.

In our empirical study, such predictors of *posttraumatic growth* as positive religious coping and hardiness are empirically established. The results of our empirical study show that anxiety and depression are inhibitory factors of *posttraumatic growth*.

Religious coping strategy plays a very important role: humility and patience create the effect of spiritual and psychological protection. *Scholars note* that hope, forgiveness and general religiosity are essential indicators of religious / spiritual well-being and are important resource for mental health [10, p. 52].

D. Oman [12] points out that religion / spirituality factors tend to correlate with healthier profiles on social connections, health behaviors, mental health, and psychological well-being.

Empirical research [4] results demonstrate that religious coping to psychological stress has been linked to positive outcomes on both physical and mental health.

A. Kosarkova, K. Malinakova, J. Dijk and P. Tavel [7] think that religion as a coping strat-

egy is mostly connected with positive health outcomes. The research results confirm that religious comfort correlated positively with life satisfaction [15].

Our empirical study found a significant inverse relationship between positive religious coping with anxiety and depression among veteran volunteers. Our results are confirmed by the results of research by other *scholars*. Positive religious coping is negatively and significantly related to depression [14, p. 221]. Positive religious coping was associated with lower odds of hypertension [16, p. 53].

The results of Aydin's study [1, p. 121] showed that correct God imagination and fate belief are used as a collaborative and self-sufficient religious coping strategy with a problem-solving coping strategy.

Empirical research [3; 17] has shown that positive religious coping plays an important role in transforming difficult relational events into more meaningful and spiritually positive experiences.

### Conclusion

Based on the results we came to the following conclusions:

1. Positive religious coping in veteran volunteers is positively correlated with hardiness, *posttraumatic growth*. Significant negative correlations were found between positive religious coping and depression, anxiety in veteran volunteers.

2. Positive religious coping and hardiness have a significant positive effect on *posttraumatic growth* in veteran volunteers. Anxiety and depression inhibit *posttraumatic growth* in veteran volunteers.

We hope that the results of our study will contribute to the development of psycho-correctional and training psychological programs for veteran volunteers.

The prospects of our further scientific research lie in the identification of psychological factors of *posttraumatic growth in combatants*.

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