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PECULIARITIES OF EMOTIONAL-VOLITIONAL SELF-REGULATION OF POLICE OFFICERS UNDER MARTIAL LAW

Abstract

The full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine has radically transformed the functional profile of the National Police. Today, a police officer is not only a law enforcement agent but also an integral part of the security and defense sector, participating in stabilization measures, evacuations, and combat operations. This shift demands a boundary level of self-regulation under permanent threats and multi-factor stress. Emotional-volitional regulation has become the primary guarantor of professional reliability—the ability to make balanced decisions amidst fatigue, anger, or fear.

The purpose of this article is to identify the psychological characteristics of law enforcement officers' emotional-volitional self-regulation during martial law. The study involved 62 police officers (3–8 years of service). A battery of methodologies was utilized: CERQ (cognitive regulation), EQI (emotional intelligence), GSE (self-efficacy), and SSPM (general self-regulation style).

The empirical results revealed a specific "executive-mobilizing" personality profile. The cognitive component is the most stable: the dominance of "Refocus on Planning" (16.4 points) and "Positive Reappraisal" (15.2 points) indicates well-established reframing mechanisms. Officers perceive danger as a professional challenge, which minimizes manifestations of catastrophizing. The emotional

sphere is defined as dysharmonious. High self-motivation (14.2 points) is coupled with a critically low level of emotion management (7.4 points). This creates a risk of energy depletion: officers are proficient at "pressing the gas" but possess "weak brakes" regarding stress deactivation. The volitional link (self-efficacy—32.8 points) acts as a buffer, where the belief in one's own capability prevents systemic collapse through intense volitional effort.

The general style of self-regulation is based on hyper-mobilization. A deficit in the "Evaluation of Results" scale (5.4 points) indicates a decrease in criticality toward one's own internal states. Self-regulation operates on the principle of "task completion at any cost," where external efficiency is achieved by ignoring internal signals of exhaustion. This creates prerequisites for systemic burnout, necessitating the implementation of specialized emotional recovery programs.

Keywords: self-regulation, emotional-volitional resilience, police officers, martial law, self-efficacy, executive-mobilizing style, professional burnout, cognitive strategies, professional reliability.

*Problem statement***.** The full-scale armed aggression against Ukraine has radically changed the functional profile of the National Police. Today, a police officer is not only a law enforcement officer but also a member of the security and defense sector, participating in stabilization measures, population evacuation, documentation of war crimes, and direct combat. This transformation requires an ultra-high level of self-regulation under permanent threats to life and health. Service during martial law is characterized by 'crisis multitasking and time deficits. Police officers face multifactorial stress, from physical exhaustion to ethical dilemmas. In these conditions, emotional-volitional regulation becomes the primary guarantor of professional reliability – the ability to make balanced decisions even when overwhelmed by fear, anger, or fatigue.

Analysis of recent research and publications. The issue of emotional-volitional regulation has been studied by numerous foreign and domestic scholars, including A. Bandura, R. Baumeister, I. Bekh, H. Heckhausen, P. Gollwitzer, D. Goleman, J. Gross, T. Kyrylenko, O. Kokun, J. Kuhl, D. Mayer, S. Maksymenko, P. Salovey, M. Savchyn, and others. Research on self-regulation in extreme conditions and policing has been conducted by Yu. Boiko-Buzyl, M. Budanova, M. Halych, O. Kudermina, V. Osiodlo, S. Polishchuk, and others. At the same time, most classical domestic and foreign studies of law enforcement self-regulation were based on peacetime experience or local conflicts. The current Ukrainian situation is unique in the intensity and scale of its stressors. There is an urgent scientific need for empirical data reflecting the actual psychological state and emotional-volitional regulation mechanisms of Ukrainian police officers during 2022–2026.

Purpose of the article is to identify the psychological characteristics of the emotional-volitional regulation of police officers during martial law.

Presentation of the main material of the study. A theoretical analysis of scientific primary sources [1, 2, 3, 4] suggests that a police officer's emotional-volitional self-regulation under martial law is an integrated, multilevel system of mental activity based on the synergy of cognitive flexibility, emotional resilience, and volitional self-efficacy. It ensures the transformation of external normative requirements into internal personal beliefs (the process of interiorization), allowing the law enforcement officer to transition from the role of an object of management to the status of an autonomous agent, capable of functioning effectively under a deficit of external control and extreme stress.

The system's effectiveness is determined by three fundamental determinants: the cognitive, which through reappraisal forms «psychological armor»; the emotional, which via somatic markers maintains the state within the «window of tolerance»; and the volitional, which ensures the transition from

intention to action despite exhaustion. Developing self-regulation is key to professional reliability and mental health, requiring specialized training programs to temper these internal resources.

To empirically study the peculiarities of emotional-volitional self-regulation in law enforcement officers during martial law, we formed a sample of respondents and selected psychodiagnostic tools. The participants were 62 police officers with 3–8 years of service in the National Police of Ukraine (13 women, 49 men; aged 22–34).

To investigate the determinants of self-regulation, we compiled a battery of psychodiagnostic tools covering the cognitive, emotional, and volitional spheres of the law enforcement officer's personality. The cognitive block is aimed at identifying strategies through which a police officer interprets stressful events and plans their activities. To study this, we utilized the «Cognitive Emotion Regulation Questionnaire» (CERQ) by N. Garnefski. This tool allows for the differentiation between adaptive strategies (cognitive reappraisal, refocus on planning, acceptance) and maladaptive ones (catastrophizing, self-blame). The emotional block allows for the assessment of affective resources and the level of stress load experienced by personnel. For the empirical study of emotional determinants, we used N. Hall’s «Emotional Intelligence Questionnaire» (EQI). This method is aimed at identifying the officer's ability to recognize and manage their own emotional states. The volitional block focuses on the ability to actively initiate actions and sustain effort. To investigate the volitional determinants of the emotional-volitional self-regulation of police officers, we used the «General Self-Efficacy Scale» (GSE) by R. Schwarzer and M. Jerusalem. This scale measures a police officer's belief in their ability to act successfully in difficult and unpredictable circumstances. We consider self-efficacy as the primary volitional predictor of active behavior during a crisis. To obtain a holistic picture, we utilized a methodology that integrates all components into a single index: V.

Morosanova's «Style of Behavior Self-Regulation Questionnaire» (SSPM). It serves as a fundamental instrument for assessing the general level of self-regulation, allowing for the detailing of specific regulatory processes: goal planning, modeling of significant conditions, programming of actions, and evaluation of results.

The first stage of our empirical research involved analyzing the cognitive emotion regulation strategies among police officers. The obtained data allow us to determine which specific cognitive operations police officers utilize to cope with stressful events under martial law conditions. A qualitative analysis of the obtained data indicates the prevalence of adaptive strategies in the self-regulation structure of the studied police officers (the predominance of the «Refocus on planning» strategy (16,4 points); a high level of «Positive reappraisal» (15,2 points), and the «Acceptance» strategy (14,8 points). An analysis of maladaptive strategies reveals that the scores for «Catastrophizing» (7,5 points) and «Blaming others» (6,8 points) are at a low level. This serves as a positive indicator of professional aptitude, as it demonstrates emotional resilience and a lack of propensity for the irrational exaggeration of threats.

The identified dominance of the «Refocus on planning» strategy in the studied sample suggests that the cognitive component of the police officers' self-regulation functions according to a pragmatic type. This indicates a high level of internalization of professional algorithms, where the cognitive processing of a stressor culminates not in emotional rumination, but in the development of specific steps to overcome the crisis situation. Such a characteristic serves as the foundation for volitional mobilization, as the presence of a clear action plan minimizes cognitive load during critical decision-making.

A detailed analysis of the «Positive reappraisal» strategy (15,2 points) suggests that this specific mechanism serves as a «bridge» between cognitive

stress processing and emotional resilience. While «Planning» is responsible for action, «Positive reappraisal» is responsible for meaning.

The high prevalence of this strategy (15,2 points) among the participants indicates the well-developed nature of cognitive reframing mechanisms, which is a key factor in the resilience of personnel. Police officers demonstrate an ability to assign positive meaning to extreme working conditions, viewing them as a factor in personal and professional self-improvement. This allows for the neutralization of the destructive impact of traumatic events at the early stages of perception, significantly reducing the psychophysiological «cost» of self-regulation and preventing the development of secondary traumatization and emotional exhaustion.

The high level of the «Acceptance» strategy (14,8 points) within the self-regulation structure of the police officers indicates the presence of a psychological mechanism for accepting the uncontrollable parameters of extreme situations. This strategy acts as a buffer, preventing the disorganization of performance caused by emotional resistance to the objective threats of martial law. For the officers studied, acceptance serves as the initial stage of the adaptation process, which allows for the stabilization of their emotional state and creates a cognitive foundation for transitioning to constructive action planning. This minimizes the risk of developing maladaptive states and facilitates the preservation of a high level of functionality under conditions of chronic stress.

Analysis of maladaptive cognitive regulation strategies revealed an overall trend toward the minimization of non-constructive cognitive operations within the sample. The lowest scores were recorded on the «Blaming others» (6,8 points) and «Catastrophizing» (7,5 points) scales, indicating a realistic perception of war-related threats and a high level of professional responsibility among the personnel. However, the identified moderate level of «Rumination» (10,4 points) points to a tendency among some officers to fixate on negative experiences following the

conclusion of extreme situations. We have identified this strategy as a primary cognitive risk factor for the development of delayed stress disorders.

The results of this research stage suggest that the sample of police officers is characterized by a well-established adaptive cognitive profile. The combination of high scores in planning and positive reappraisal, alongside low levels of catastrophizing, creates a reliable cognitive foundation for emotional-volitional self-regulation. However, the presence of a moderate level of «Rumination» indicates that a portion of the officers is prone to the intrusive dwelling on past negative experiences, which could serve as a target for future psychocorrectional interventions. The analysis of maladaptive (non-constructive) strategies within the police sample is critical for predicting the risks of professional deformation and the emergence of psychosomatic disorders. While the overall profile of the sample remains adaptive, moderate indicators on certain non-constructive scales highlight «vulnerability zones» among the personnel.

An analysis of the emotional intelligence research results (based on N. Hall's EQi methodology) indicates that police officers operating under martial law conditions exhibit a specific profile, where high pragmatic motivation is coupled with difficulties in emotional relaxation.

The analysis of the results obtained for the individual scales indicates the following:

1. Self-motivation (14,2 points) is the dominant scale, representing the highest score compared to all other scales. This indicates a high capacity among police officers for volitional mobilization through the emotional reinforcement of goals. These officers are capable of channeling their emotions toward task performance, even in the presence of fatigue or fear.

2. Recognition of the emotions of others (13,8 points). This high result is driven by professional specificity. Police officers are trained to «read» non-verbal signals of threat, aggression, or insincerity. In wartime conditions, this skill

becomes heightened due to safety concerns at checkpoints, during filtration measures, or during arrests.

3. Emotional awareness (10,6 points). This moderate level indicates that while police officers generally understand what they are feeling, they tend toward a certain distancing from their own emotions. This serves as a «professional filter» that prevents them from fully absorbing the horrors of war-related events; however, it may also hinder the timely detection of burnout signs.

4. Empathy (9,2 points). This score sits at the lower bound of the average range. It reflects a psychological defense mechanism – «detachment». Given the frequent contact with significant human suffering (evacuations, fatalities), excessive empathy would lead to rapid secondary traumatization. Consequently, police officers maintain the capacity for compassion primarily at a functional level rather than a deeply affective one.

5. Managing one's emotions (7,4 points). This is a identified risk zone and the lowest score among all scales. This indicates that police officers find it difficult to independently reduce their level of emotional arousal after a stressful event. This result explains the moderate «Rumination» score (10,4) observed in the previous methodology. Because officers cannot «switch off» an emotion, it transitions into intrusive thoughts. This suggests a weakening of the «volitional brake» (regulatory inhibition) due to chronic combat-related tension.

The analysis of police officers' emotional intelligence (N. Hall's methodology) has revealed a specific disproportion: a high level of pragmatic self-motivation and social perception is coupled with a deficit in self-emotion management skills. The identified low score on the «Managing one's emotions» scale (7,4 points) indicates a state of emotional rigidity and difficulty in restoring psychophysiological homeostasis after the completion of duty tasks. This confirms the hypothesis that the self-regulation of personnel under wartime conditions is carried out primarily through volitional effort (mobilization) rather than emotional

flexibility. This pattern creates a risk of rapid energy depletion within the system. It was established that while police officers possess high mobilization potential, they demonstrate an inability to effectively deactivate stress states. A low level of emotional flexibility against the backdrop of prolonged military-related strain leads to the fixation of negative affect, which is further evidenced by a tendency toward rumination. We define this result as a critical point of vulnerability in the self-regulation system, as the deficit in emotion management skills offsets the advantages of high self-motivation and creates direct prerequisites for the psychosomatization of stress and professional deformation of the personality.

Analysis of the research results regarding general self-efficacy indicates a high level of self-belief among police officers, which is essential for performing professional duties during the period of martial law. Our findings, obtained using the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSE) by R. Schwarzer and M. Jerusalem, demonstrate that the mean score of 32,8 on the general self-efficacy index suggests that the majority of the surveyed officers possess a stable mindset toward success and confidence in their ability to overcome obstacles.

It is worth recalling that according to Albert Bandura's theory, high self-efficacy determines the level of effort an individual exerts toward achieving a goal. For a police officer, this implies that despite fatigue and emotional strain (as evidenced by the results of the previous methodologies), the officer does not surrender. The high score indicates that police officers perceive the complex tasks of war not as threats to be avoided, but as challenges to be mastered.

There is a clear correlation between high self-efficacy and the dominance of the «Refocus on planning» strategy (16,4 points) within the CERQ results, specifically:

- self-belief enables constructive cognitive processing: the logical chain follows a clear sequence: «I am confident that I can cope → therefore, I can focus

on constructing a plan». Confidence in one's own capabilities allows the cognitive apparatus to shift from emotional distress toward task-oriented solutions;

- preventative function: had self-efficacy been low, the officers would have been more likely to engage in «Catastrophizing». However, in our sample, we observe the opposite – an adaptive pattern, where high self-efficacy serves as a protective factor against irrational fear and cognitive disorganization.

A high level of self-efficacy serves as a psychological buffer. Despite the low scores on the «Managing one's emotions» scale (7,4 points), it is the belief in their own professional competence that prevents psychological collapse. These officers maintain their resilience not through emotional tranquility, but through a volitional conviction: «Who, if not me? I know I can do this». The obtained score of 32,8 points indicates that the experience of serving under martial law has forged a «hardened» self-efficacy in these officers. Having already navigated numerous critical situations, their confidence has been reinforced by the realization: «I have survived and prevailed in difficult conditions before; therefore, I will succeed next time as well».

Analysis of the results from the general self-efficacy scale (32,8 points) suggests that the police officer sample is characterized by a high level of cognitive-volitional confidence. It has been established that self-efficacy acts as a core determinant of self-regulation, compensating for the deficit in emotion management skills. The high score on this scale indicates an established mindset toward the active overcoming of difficulties and individual resilience to the extreme factors of martial law. Among the studied officers, self-efficacy is closely linked to adaptive cognitive strategies (planning and positive reappraisal), creating an integral system of psychological readiness for performing duty tasks under highly demanding conditions.

Based on the study of the cognitive, emotional, and volitional determinants of police officers' emotional-volitional self-regulation, we have outlined a «Profile

of professional resilience of law enforcement officers in wartime», which can be characterized as follows:

- cognitive component – «Robust»: police officers actively engage in action planning, demonstrate an acceptance of reality, and reappraise danger as a professional challenge rather than a paralyzing threat;
- emotional component – «Dysharmonious»: high motivation (the «accelerator» effect) is coupled with a critically low ability to relax and manage internal anger or anxiety (a deficit in «regulatory brakes»). This imbalance suggests that the system operates at high intensity without adequate recovery mechanisms;
- volitional component – «High»: there is a profound internal confidence in one's personal capability to act. This serves as the primary driver that sustains operational activity despite emotional strain.

Consequently, there is no need to enhance police officers' motivation or teach them planning skills (as they are already proficient in these areas). Rather, it is imperative to provide them with tools for emotional self-regulation to prevent sudden burnout caused by the excessive overdrive of their volitional activity.

The analysis of the results obtained via V. Morosanova's «Style of Behavior Self-Regulation» (SSPM) questionnaire constitutes the most comprehensive and summarizing stage of our empirical research. This methodology allows us to observe not isolated strategies, but rather an integral system illustrating how police officers plan, model, and adjust their activities under extreme conditions.

An analysis of the results from the Style of Behavior Self-Regulation (SSPM) questionnaire allows for an assessment of both the procedural components of self-regulation (planning, modeling, programming, and evaluation of results) and regulatory-personality traits (flexibility and autonomy).

The «Programming» (7,8 points) and «Planning» (7,2 points) scales exhibit high scores. These indicators are the highest within the sample, fully correlating

with the results from the CERQ methodology («Refocus on planning»). Police officers demonstrate a well-developed ability to elaborate detailed action algorithms. They do not merely set goals but possess a clear understanding of the sequence of steps required for their implementation. In wartime conditions, this manifests as «professional action automatism».

The «Modeling» scale (6,9 points): this high score reflects a well-developed ability to identify the significant conditions of a situation. This finding is further supported by the high scores recorded in the «Recognition of the emotions of others» scale. Police officers demonstrate an adequate assessment of external threats, the operational environment, and the resources currently at their disposal.

The «Autonomy» scale (6,5 points): an above-average score indicates the police officers' capacity for independent regulation without constant supervision from leadership. This aligns with the transition toward a «Self-system», as discussed in the theoretical framework. In the context of autonomous operations within de-occupied territories or combat zones, this quality is critical for survival.

The «Flexibility» scale (6,2 points): an average level of flexibility indicates that police officers can adapt to changes, but doing so requires significant effort. In wartime conditions, where the situation changes instantaneously, this resource often operates at the brink of exhaustion.

The «Evaluation of results» scale (5,4 points): this represents a notable weakness and is the lowest score among all scales. This scale is responsible for self-criticism and reflection. A low score suggests that police officers do not always adequately assess their own mistakes or their actual psychophysiological state. These findings explain the low scores previously observed on the «Managing emotions» (7,4 points) and «Emotional awareness» (10,6 points) scales. The officer is unable to adjust their behavior in a timely manner because their internal «result evaluation» system is focused exclusively on the external task rather than the internal state.

Summarizing the results of the SSPM methodology, it has been established that the overall level of self-regulation among the studied police officers is high (34,8 points), sustained by the compensatory development of the «Programming» and «Planning» scales. However, the identified deficit in the «Evaluation of results» scale (5,4 points) indicates a decrease in criticality regarding one's own states and errors during the course of activity. This confirms our hypothesis that the emotional-volitional self-regulation of law enforcement officers under wartime conditions is hyper-mobilizing in nature. In this model, external productivity is achieved by ignoring internal regulatory signals of exhaustion, prioritizing operational objectives over the preservation of the individual's psychological resources.

Conclusions. Based on the analysis of the conducted empirical study, we have outlined a psychological portrait of a police officer regarding the specifics of their emotional-volitional self-regulation in wartime. Accordingly, the following characteristics are immanent to police officers: regulatory style – «executive-mobilizing»: the system is geared toward the ideal formulation and execution of plans (high «Programming», «Planning», and «Self-efficacy»); source of activity: high «Self-motivation» and a profound belief in one's personal capability (agency); critical vulnerability: a deficit in internal feedback loops («Evaluation of results») and an inability to achieve emotional recovery («Management of emotions»). The self-regulation of police officers operates on the principle of «task completion at any cost». They are exceptionally effective as instruments of protection; however, they carry a high risk of an internal «systemic failure» (burnout), as the components of self-assessment and self-restoration remain inhibited.

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