

## ART THERAPY AS A METHOD OF SUPPORTING STRESS RESISTANCE OF UKRAINIAN WOMEN

Pyroh Hanna Volodymyrivna<sup>1</sup>, Falkivska Liudmyla Valentynivna<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Associate professor, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University, Ukraine,

<sup>2</sup>Candidate of Masters of Psychology, Zhytomyr Ivan Franko State University,  
Social Manager of the Sustainability Center of the Public Organization "Suzirya Malyn",  
Ukraine

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.14986821>

**Abstract.** *This article addresses the issue of stress resistance among Ukrainian women in wartime conditions. According to the results of a diagnostic study, most surveyed women have developed psychological resilience, demonstrating high stress resistance and the ability to regulate emotions and adapt to difficult circumstances. However, a high level of perceived stress prevails among women, indicating the necessity of developing psychological support measures to reduce stress levels and strengthen psychological resistance. The effectiveness of art therapy as a method of supporting and developing stress resistance is substantiated, there is a description of techniques that should be used in special programs for women*

**Keywords:** *art therapy, stress, stress resistance, Ukrainian women, emotional regulation, psychological resistance.*

The war in Ukraine made a significant impact on well-being of Ukrainian women. This is due to numerous stress factors such as threats to life, forced separation from relatives, financial difficulties, traumatic experiences, and displacement. While experiencing constant threats to their own lives and the lives of their loved ones, Ukrainian women continue to fulfill family duties, professional, public, and volunteer activities while also supporting men and loved ones in war and upon their return. Studies indicate problems in family adaptation and communication, child-rearing, decreased satisfaction with family relationships, increased tension, emotional exhaustion, and a growing need for psychological support [3-5]. In these conditions, the issue of developing stress resistance in Ukrainian women and creating psychological assistance programs for them is particularly relevant.

To help Ukrainian women overcome difficulties, it is necessary to study their level of stress resistance and create conditions for its support and development through the implementation of special programs, particularly art therapy. In finding ways to support health, physically and emotionally exhausted women need experiences of internal harmonization through creativity. The ability of art to effectively adjust psycho-emotional states is the basis of art therapy. The effectiveness of this method is based on the understanding that creativity makes conditions for emotional expression, anxiety reduction, the formation of positive self-perception, the creation of internal resources, and increased resistance.

This article presents the results of a study on the stress resistance of a group of Ukrainian women living within a specific community. The study involved 35 women aged 18 to 63 who had experience visiting support groups, mental health improvement training, etc. The empirical study of stress resistance among Ukrainian women was conducted using the following methodologies: the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale to determine perceived stress levels [1],

Schreiner's Stress State Diagnostic Methodology, and the CD-RISC Scale to assess resistance levels [13].

According to the results of research on the level of perceived stress using the Kessler Psychological Distress Scale, 89% of surveyed women exhibited a high level of perceived stress over the past month, 11% showed a moderate stress level, and none demonstrated a low stress level. Significant psychological distress in nearly 90% of women suggests that they perceive life as unpredictable, uncontrollable, and emotionally exhausting. These indicators reflect strong emotional tension, which may negatively impact women's psychological health, increasing the risks of emotional burnout and anxiety disorders.

Self-regulation indicators during stress, assessed using Schreiner's methodology, showed that 61.8% of surveyed women have a high level of control over their emotions, allowing them to remain restrained and stable even in difficult circumstances. Typically, these women avoid irritability and are not inclined to blame themselves or others for what is happening. A moderate level of regulation was found in 35.3% of respondents, indicating some instability in the emotional sphere but an overall ability to adapt. A weak level of regulation, characterized by increased fatigue and emotional exhaustion, was identified in only 2.9% of women. These women often lose self-control in stressful situations, struggle to manage themselves, and require self-regulation skill development. Thus, nearly two-thirds of surveyed women in the third year of war are able to maintain emotional stability and control their emotions in difficult situations.

The resistance diagnostics using the Connor-Davidson Scale (CD-RISC-10) demonstrated that 35.3% of surveyed Ukrainian women had a high level of stress resistance, 32.4% had an above-average level, 17.7% had an average level, 8.8% had a below-average level, and 5.9% had a low level. These findings suggest that approximately three-quarters of study participants, in the third year of war, possess average to high stress resistance, helping them adapt to life changes, overcome difficulties, and manage various war-induced challenges.

The diagnostic study results indicate that Ukrainian women generally possess well-developed psychological "resilience," demonstrating high stress resistance and the ability to regulate emotions and adapt to difficult conditions. However, the predominance of high and moderate perceived stress levels and the presence of a certain percentage of women with low stress resistance and emotional regulation highlight the need to develop psychological support measures and teach self-regulation techniques to reduce stress and strengthen psychological resistance in modern conditions.

To enhance the stress resistance of Ukrainian women during wartime, art therapy is an effective form of psychological support [10]. Art therapy is a universal method of mental health support that allows people to express emotions, process traumatic experiences, and look for internal resource for managing stress. Due to its accessibility, lack of restrictions, and a wide spectrum of techniques (painting, sculpting, collage creation, media art therapy, etc.), this method can be applied to various age and social groups. Art therapy aims to harmonize personality development through self-expression and self-exploration. Its advantages include creating a relaxed and safe atmosphere, fostering self-awareness, and providing opportunities for emotional and psychological expression.

Art therapy techniques are widely used to reduce stress, particularly among women who have experienced stressful situations, including war (P. Gerald, M. Wardell, J. Miller). Ukrainian psychologists such as J. Kozhina and others have developed psycho-emotional support programs for female military personnel and veterans; T. Tytarenko and others focused on using art therapy

to work with internally displaced persons to restore their personal integrity [9]. G. Rurik demonstrates art therapy's potential for restoration of a person who has endured tragic events [8], among others.

Various types of art therapy techniques have proven effective in alleviating emotional tension, harmonizing the internal state, and developing resources necessary for overcoming stress, including:

1. Isotherapy is one of the leading methods, which includes techniques of finger painting, drawing fears and anxieties, as well as creating symbols of protection or inner strength [2]. This approach allows women to express their emotions in a safe and acceptable form. Drawing promotes the release of accumulated tension, helps to process anxieties through artistic images, and opens up a new experience of emotional self-perception. The creation of symbols of inner strength is especially important, as it helps women develop a sense of control over their lives.

2. Collaging and creating creative projects, such as scrapbooking or decorating photo frames, help women organize their memories and express feelings about events they have experienced. These techniques stimulate emotional resistance, allow preserving the most valuable moments of life, and create a space for positive associations [7]. This is especially important for those who have experienced stress or trauma due to the loss of their home or separation from loved ones.

3. Clay modeling or working with other materials helps relieve physical and emotional tension. Creating figurines that symbolize protection or inner strength not only aids in physical relaxation but also improves sensorimotor skills [6]. This process promotes emotional balance recovery, as it allows women to feel like creators and symbolically build their inner protection.

4. Doll therapy is another effective method of art therapy. It includes the creation of motanka dolls, which can serve not only as symbolic amulets but also as materializations of inner desires and intentions [12]. The process of making a doll helps women work with their inner "self," experience suppressed emotions, and boost self-esteem. Additionally, the creation of such amulets helps transfer processed values and goals from the mental level into the material world.

5. Mandala therapy offers the creation of symmetrical images in a circle using colored grains or other materials. The process of making a mandala helps structure chaotic thoughts and emotions, which is extremely important in conditions of constant stress [11]. This technique allows women to analyze their feelings, values, and motives, harmonize their inner state, and develop the ability for self-regulation.

The advantages of using art therapy during war lie in the fact that it is an accessible and universal technique that does not require special skills or preparation. It allows women to effectively work with emotions without necessarily verbalizing them. The uniqueness of this approach is that even the smallest achievements in creativity help form a positive self-perception, reduce anxiety levels, and increase emotional resistance. These methods are not only a tool for support in extreme war conditions but also a means of restoring inner balance, contributing to the improvement of Ukrainian women's mental well-being. They allow them to find strength and confidence to continue living even in the most difficult circumstances.

## **REFERENCES**

1. Kessler R. C. et al. Screening for serious mental illness in the general population. *Arch Gen Psychiatry*. 2003. 60(2): 184-9.

2. Калька Н., Ковальчук З. Практикум з арт-терапії. Ч. 1. Львів: ЛьвДУВС, 2020. 232 с.
3. Пирог Г. В., Свінціцька М. М. Задоволеність жінок подружніми стосунками в умовах війни. *Наука та освіта в умовах викликів сьогодення: Збірник матеріалів Міжнародної науково-практичної конференції*. Research Europe, 2023. С. 264-267.
4. Пирог Г. В., Удод С. Ю. Вплив комунікації в сім'ях військовослужбовців та адаптація в родинях військових під час воєнних дій в Україні та США. *Science and innovation of modern world*. London, United Kingdom. 2023. Pp. 417-422.
5. Пирог Г., Пуцик Н. Особливості переживання стресу жінками, які перебувають у відпустці по догляду за дитиною. *Актуальні проблеми психічного здоров'я: Збірник наукових праць*. Житомир, 2024. С. 224-229.
6. Подрезова О.С. Глиноterapia як вид арт-терапії. 2017. 18 с.
7. Пригула О. Подолання стресу: метод арт-терапії. *Перспективи та інновації науки*. 2023. №12 (30). С. 714-722.
8. Рурик Г. Здатність до відновлення особистості, яка пережила трагічні події. *Простір арт-терапії* : Збірник наукових праць Університету менеджменту освіти. 2022. Випуск 1 (31). С. 6-15.
9. Титаренко Т.М. та ін. Способи підвищення соціально-адаптивних можливостей людини в умовах переживання наслідків травматичних подій. Харків, 2019. 100 с.
10. Фальківська Л. Арт-терапия як метод підтримки психічного здоров'я в умовах війни. *Актуальні проблеми психічного здоров'я* : Збірник наукових праць. Житомир, 2024. С. 351-353.
11. Фалько Н.М. Мандала як засіб арт-терапії. *Науковий вісник Херсонського державного університету. Серія: Психологічні науки*. 2017. Випуск 2, том 3. С.32-36.
12. Шаутіна А.А. [Лялькотерапія у роботі з дітьми, що пережили травмуючі події](#). Миколаїв, 2023.108 с.
13. Школіна Н.В. та ін. Адаптація та валідація україномовної версії шкали стресостійкості Коннора-Девідсона-10 (CD-RISC-10): Апробація у хворих на анкілозивний спондиліт. *Український ревматологічний журнал*. 2020. № 2 (80). С. 72-76.