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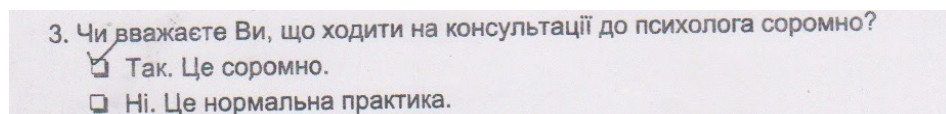
Mykola VORONIN

## Stigma to psychological help among Ukrainian ATO/OJF veterans analysis: pilot study

MYKOLA VORONIN. **Stigma to psychological help among Ukrainian ATO/OJF veterans analysis: pilot study.** *The results of a pilot study developed by the author for Ukrainian ATO / OOS veterans in this article are partially presented. 43 veterans were interviewed, including 5 women and 38 men. Among others, the question was asked: "Do you think that going to a psychologist is a shame?" 40 respondents answered that it was not a shame, and three answered that it was a shame. False conclusions can be made that stigma does not bother Ukrainian veterans, but the article shows points that prove otherwise. Conclusion is made that although numbers say that only 3 of 43 respondents mentioned that it was a shame going to psychologist, additional questions revealed stigma concerned veterans among those, who mentioned that it was not a shame.*  
**Keywords:** Stigma, Ukrainian veterans, ATO, OJF, author's survey, pilot study.

**Introduction.** Stigma is considered to be one of the most significant barriers to receive mental health care for veterans all over the world [1, 2, 3]. Researchers battle stigma with different approaches [4] and studies. Ukraine has started to experience severe active combat in war against Russian Federation since 2014. After more than six years of permanent war action in the Eastern Ukraine, the country faced war veterans problem. No government institution to register number of war veterans or veteran suicides is created, but the news regularly bring information about another unregistered war veteran suicide. In this situation researches to prevent Ukrainian war veteran suicides are very important. Significant progress for researches about psychological help in Ukraine can be found at the article testing the effectiveness and implementation of a brief version of the Common Elements Treatment Approach (CETA) [5], but still the problem of Ukrainian veterans psychological help needs more thorough investigation.

**Research.** To identify problems Ukrainian veterans face seeking for psychological help, a special survey was designed by the author of this article who is also a war veteran. Among others true/false question addressing stigma was also asked. The question looked like this:



**Picture 1. Question addressing stigma to Ukrainian veterans (in Ukrainian language)**

3. Do you think that it is a shame to go to a psychologist?

☒ Yes. It's a shame.

☐ No. This is normal practice.

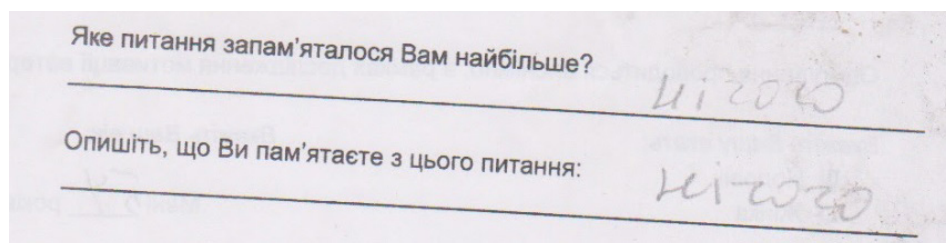
In pilot study 43 veterans participated. Among them 5 women and 38 men, 10 under 30 years old, 22 between 30 and 45 years old, 11 participants were of age after 45. Veterans were randomly selected and these numbers can not represent the overall quantity of Ukrainian women veterans compared to men or overall age distribution. The only moment these numbers represent is that different groups were included to this pilot study. Hypothesis was that the number of participants who answered positively to this direct question will prevail demonstrating severe stigma issues for Ukrainian veterans. But the received results

were quite opposite. 40 respondents of 43 selected “No. This is normal practice.” It stands for 93 % of questioned veterans approximately. While only three of 43 respondents selected “Yes. It’s a shame.” It stands for approximately 7 % respectively. These results can show that either 93 % of respondents don’t think that it is a shame to visit a psychologist or they can show that question and answer design helps the respondent to choose the “correct” answer. To be sincere, the question is designed to help veteran understand that there is no shame in visiting a psychologist. And numbers show that it may be the case. But the trick of the survey was that it consisted of two pages. On the first page of survey respondents answer ten questions including the question addressing stigma and after that the second page can be filled. The second page one needed to fill not looking back at the first page. It contained two open unnumbered questions:

What question do you remember the most?

Describe what you remember from it:

That looked like this:



**Picture 2. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 50 with answers “nothing” on both in Ukrainian**

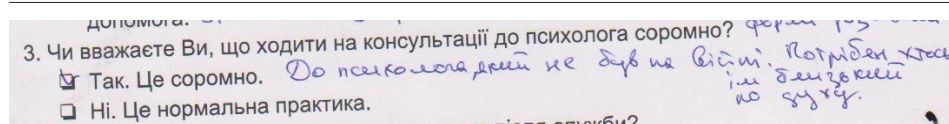
*What question do you remember the most?*

*nothing*

*Describe what you remember from it:*

*nothing*

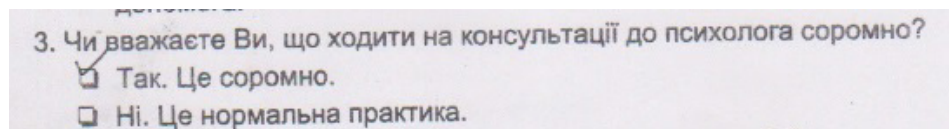
Respondent code number 44 a man of 33 years old who mentioned that it is a shame to go to a psychologist had a special argument about it which he listed near checkboxes that can be seen at picture 3.



**Picture 3. Answer “Yes. It’s a shame.” checked by respondent code number 44 to the question “Do you think that it is a shame to go to a psychologist?” and his comments “To a psychologist, who has never been to war. Someone close to their spirit needed.” about it.**

So from picture 3 one can see that respondent code number 44 thinks that it is a shame to go to a psychologist “who has never been to war” and “they” need “someone close to their spirit”. His word “they” means that he is convinced that help is needed to someone else and help needs to be provided by a psychologist, who participated in the war and can understand veteran in his psychological problems. On the second page he picked another question to remember.

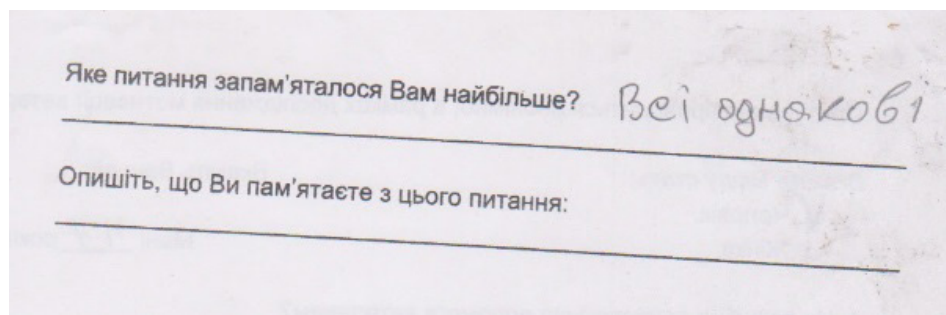
Respondent code number 50 a man of 54 years old checked box “Yes. It’s a shame” without any comments as shown on picture 4 and answered “nothing” on both questions of the second page as shown on picture 2.



**Picture 4. Answer “Yes. It’s a shame.” checked by respondent code number 50 to the question “Do you think that it is a shame to go to a psychologist?”**

Respondent code number 51 a man of 47 years checked box the same as previous respondent (picture 4) without any comments and on the second page he gave similar to previous answer “All same” (picture 5) although these respondents were interviewed separately at different locations and have never met.

Except the respondents who checked the box “Yes. It’s a shame” answering the question “Do you think that it is a shame to go to a psychologist?” 6 respondents that remembered this question the most were also identified on the second page of the survey. These 6 respondents show that the problem of stigma bothers them also.

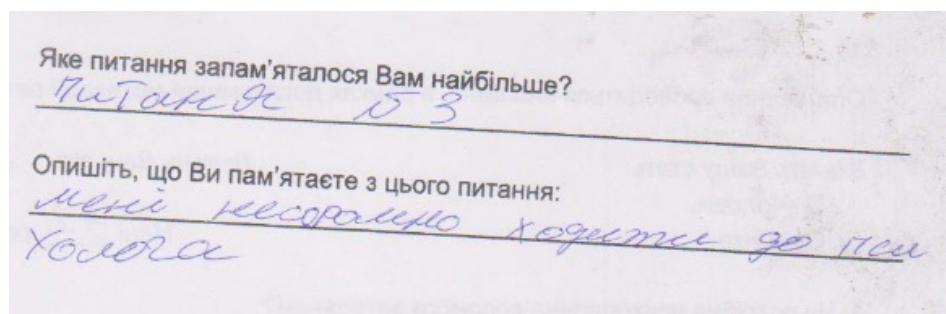


Яке питання запам'яталося Вам найбільше? Всі однакові

Опишіть, що Ви пам'ятаєте з цього питання:

Picture 5. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 51 with answer "All same" on the first question "What question do you remember the most?" in Ukrainian.

Respondent code number 10 a man of 32 years old checked box "No. This is normal practice." to the question "Do you think that it is a shame to go to a psychologist?" without any comments but at the second page he mentioned that he remembered this question most and to the request "describe what you remember from it" responded with pride "I am not ashamed to go to a psychologist" (Picture 6)



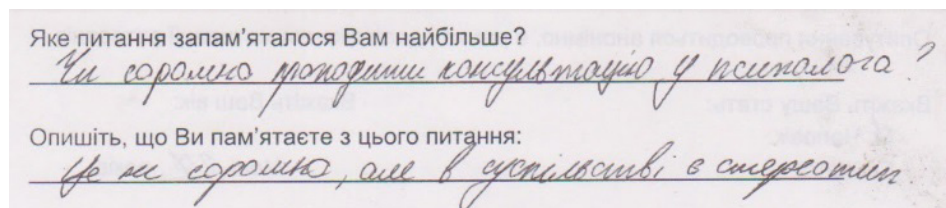
Яке питання запам'яталося Вам найбільше? Питання 53

Опишіть, що Ви пам'ятаєте з цього питання: мені не соромно ходити до психолога

Picture 6. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 10 with the answer "question #3" to the first question "What question do you remember the most?" and answer "I am not ashamed to go to a psychologist" for the second question "Describe what you remember from it:" in Ukrainian.

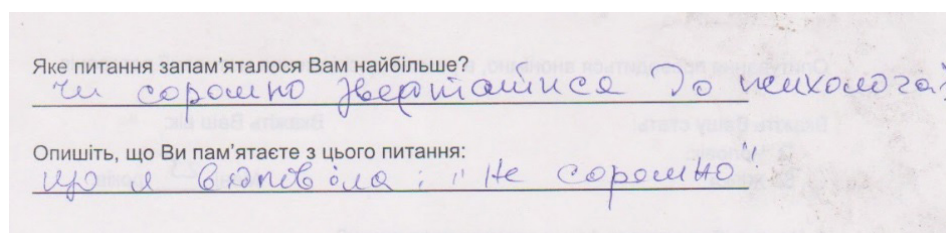
Respondent code number 11 a man of 27 years old checked box "No. This is normal practice." the same as previous respondent without comments but on the second page he mentioned that he remembered the most question "If it is a shame to have a consultation with a psychologist"

and describing what he remembers from this question he mentioned that "It is not a shame. But in society there is a stereotype" (picture 7).



**Picture 7. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 11 with the answer "If it is a shame to have a consultation with a psychologist" to the first question "What question do you remember the most?" and answer "It is not a shame. But in society there is a stereotype" for the second question "Describe what you remember from it:" in Ukrainian.**

Respondent code number 12 a woman of 25 years old checked box "No. This is normal practice." the same as previous respondent without comments but on the second page she mentioned that she remembered the most question "Is it a shame to approach a psychologist?" and to the request "describe what you remember from it" she responded with pride "That I answered it is not a shame." (Picture 8)

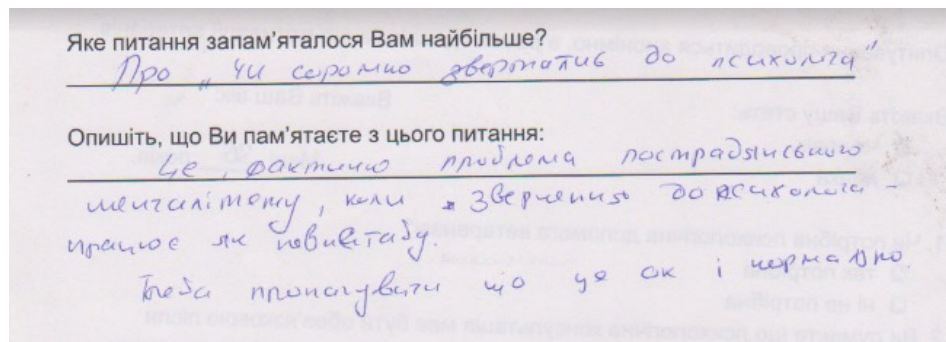


**Picture 8. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 12 with the answer "Is it a shame to approach a psychologist" to the first question "What question do you remember the most?" and a proud answer "That I answered it is not a shame." for the second question "Describe what you remember from it:" in Ukrainian.**

Respondent code number 13 a man of 36 years old checked box "No. This is normal practice." the same as previous respondent without



comments but on the second page he mentioned that he remembered the most question “About is it a shame to approach a psychologist?” and to the request “describe what you remember from it” he responded “This is actually the problem of postsoviet mentality, when approach to a psychologist works as sort of taboo. There is a need to propagate that it is ok and normal.” (Picture 9)



**Picture 9. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 13 with the answer “About is it a shame to approach a psychologist?” to the first question “What question do you remember the most?” and answer “This is actually the problem of postsoviet mentality, when approach to a psychologist works as sort of taboo. There is a need to propagate that it is ok and normal.” for the second question “Describe what you remember from it:” in Ukrainian.**

Respondent code number 14 a man of 24 years old checked box “No. This is normal practice.” the same as previous respondent without comments but on the second page he mentioned that he remembered the most question number 3 and to the request “describe what you remember from it” he responded “Painful question of Ukrainian socium about expedience or inexpedience of approach to psychologists.” (Picture 10)

Respondent code number 15 a woman of 23 years old checked box “No. This is normal practice.” the same as previous respondent without comments but on the second page she mentioned that she remembered the most question “Is it a shame to go to a psychologist?” and to the request “describe what you remember from it” she responded “The question” (Picture 11)

Яке питання запам'яталося Вам найбільше?

3

Опишіть, що Ви пам'ятаєте з цього питання:

що це питання  
про довіру до психологів

Picture 10. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 14 with the answer "3" to the first question "What question do you remember the most?" and answer "Painful question of Ukrainian socium about expedience or inexpedience of approach to psychologists." for the second question "Describe what you remember from it:" in Ukrainian.

Яке питання запам'яталося Вам найбільше?

Про те, чи соромно ходити до психолога

Опишіть, що Ви пам'ятаєте з цього питання:

Саме питання

Picture 11. Two open questions from the second page of the respondent code number 15 with the answer "About is it a shame to go to a psychologist?" to the first question "What question do you remember the most?" and answer "The question" for the second question "Describe what you remember from it:" in Ukrainian.

**Conclusion.** So, final numbers say that 9 respondents of 43 during the pilot study were concerned about the question addressing stigma. It is approximately 20 % of respondents. Open questions from the second page of the survey unveiled problems concerning stigma that bother Ukrainian veterans most:

1. War veteran psychologist that understands their needs and spirit needed. (Picture 3).
2. It is not a shame. But in society there is a stereotype. (Picture 7).
3. The problem of postsoviet mentality, when approach to a psychologist works as sort of taboo. There is a need to propagate that it is ok and normal. (Picture 9)



4. Painful question of Ukrainian socium about expedience or in expedience of approach to psychologists. (Picture 10)

Open questions from the second page identified veterans that may have had problems with stigma and now can proudly state that there is no more shame in going to a psychologist (picture 6 and picture 8).

Pilot study showed unexpectedly powerful and interesting results. The way questions formed touch Ukrainian veterans. So the research needs to be continued on a bigger scale.

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*Abstracts*

**МИКОЛА ВОРОНІН. Аналіз стигми до отримання психологічної допомоги серед українських ветеранів АТО/ООС: пілотне дослідження.** У даній статті частково представлено результати пілотного дослідження розробленого автором для українських ветеранів АТО/ООС. Було опитано 43 ветерана з них 5 жінок та 38 чоловіків. Серед інших було поставлено питання: "Чи вважаєте Ви, що ходити до психолога соромно?" 40 респондентів відповіло, що не соромно, а три відповіли, що соромно. Можна зробити хибний висновок, що стигма українських ветеранів не турбує, але в статті показані моменти, які доводять протилежне. Зроблено висновок, що, хоча цифри говорять, буцім лише 3 із 43 респондентів вказали, що це соромно йти до психолога, додаткові запитання виявили ветеранів, яких турбує стигма серед тих, хто зазначив, що це не соромно.

**Ключові слова:** стигма, українські ветерани, АТО, ООС авторське опитування, пілотне дослідження.

**НИКОЛАЙ ВОРОНИН. Анализ стигмы к психологической помощи среди украинских ветеранов АТО/ООС: пилотное исследование.** В статье частично представлены результаты пилотного исследования разработанного автором для украинских ветеранов АТО/ООС. Было опрошено 43 ветерана из них 5 женщин и 38 мужчин. Среди прочих был поставлен вопрос: "Считаете ли Вы, что ходить к психологу стыдно?" 40 респондентов ответили, что не стыдно, а 3 ответили, что стыдно. Можно сделать вывод, что стигма украинских ветеранов не беспокоит, но в статье показаны моменты, которые доказывают обратное. Сделан вывод о том, что не смотря на цифры, которые говорят, что только 3 из 43 опрошенных считают, что это стыдно ходить к психологу, дополнительные вопросы раскрыли ветеранов, которых беспокоит стигма среди тех, которые считают, что это не стыдно.

**Ключевые слова:** Стигма, украинские ветераны, АТО, ООС, авторский опрос, пилотное исследование.

**MYKOŁA WORONIN. Analiza stygmatyzacji przed uzyskaniem pomocy psychologicznej wśród ukraińskich weteranów ATO (operacji antyterrorystycznej) / OOS (operacja sił połączonych).** W artykule częściowo przedstawiono wyniki badania pilotażowego opracowanego przez autora dla weteranów ukraińskich ATO / OOS. Przebadano 43 weteranów, w tym 5 kobiet i 38 mężczyzn. Postawiono

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*między innymi pytanie: „Czy uważa Pan/Pani, że wizyta u psychologa to wstyd?” 40 respondentów odpowiedziało, że to nie wstyd, a trzech odpowiedziało, że to wstyd. Można niesłusznie stwierdzić, że stygmatyzacja ukraińskim weteranom nie przeszkadza, ale artykuł przedstawia momenty, które udowadniają coś przeciwnego. Wyszło wniosek, że chociaż liczby pokazują, że tylko 3 z 43 respondentów wskazało, że wstydem jest pójść do psychologa, dodatkowe pytania wskazały na weteranów, którzy obawiają się stygmatyzacji wśród tych, którzy mówili, że to nie wstyd.*

**Słowa kluczowe:** *stygmatyzacja, ukraińscy weterani, operacja antyterrorystyczna, autorska ankieta, badanie pilotażowe.*