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ПРАКТИЧНОЇ  
ПСИХОЛОГІЇ**

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## A STUDY OF THE IMPACT OF WAR-RELATED UNCERTAINTY ON REPRODUCTIVE INTENTIONS

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The study was conducted in two consecutive stages and involved Ukrainian citizens who, before the start of military events, considered the territory of the country as their permanent place of residence. The sample included adult respondents of different age categories, covering young, middle-aged, and mature adults.

At the first, pilot stage of the study, a small group of participants was involved, who are citizens of Ukraine and belong to different adult age categories. The gender ratio of respondents was balanced, and all participants confirmed being in serious relationships at the time of the study.

In addition, the key selection criterion was that the participants considered the possibility of planning to have a child within their current relationships. This stage made it possible to test the effectiveness of the study tools and assess the relevance of the selected variables for further analysis [2].

At the second stage of the study, an expanded sample of respondents was involved, most of whom identified their gender as female, and a smaller proportion as male. The participants represented various age groups, covering both young adults and middle-aged individuals. The largest share of respondents fell within the age range of the active reproductive period, while older participants constituted a smaller but significant part of the sample.

All participants confirmed that they are citizens of Ukraine who resided in the country on a permanent basis before the outbreak of military events. In addition, they were in long-term or serious relationships, within which they considered the possibility of having a child. This stage of the study made it possible to obtain a broader spectrum of data necessary to analyze the relationship between the level of uncertainty and reproductive intentions [1].

The sample included participants who met the following conditions:

1. Citizenship and place of residence: respondents are citizens of Ukraine who, before the start of full-scale military actions, considered the territory of the country as their permanent place of residence.

2. Marital status and reproductive intentions: participants are in long-term or serious relationships, which they independently define as significant, and consider the possibility of having a child within these relationships.

3. Reproductive experience: the study included individuals who had already become parents or became pregnant during the military conflict, as well as those whose partners became pregnant or gave birth during this period.

4. Pregnancy at the time of the study: a separate group of participants consisted of individuals who were pregnant or had a partner expecting a child at the time of the study.

5. Voluntary participation: all respondents provided informed consent to participate in the study.

This approach to participant selection ensured the representativeness of the sample and covered individuals with varying levels of experience in parenting and reproductive planning.

Exclusion criteria from the study. The study did not include respondents who met the following characteristics:

- Lack of current reproductive intentions: couples who became pregnant before the outbreak of the military conflict, gave birth during it, and currently do not plan another pregnancy.

- Conscious unwillingness to have children: respondents who identify as childfree and do not consider parenthood as a life perspective.

- Marital status: individuals not in relationships that could be considered serious or long-term did not participate in the study.

- Place of residence before the start of military actions: individuals who were already living abroad before the full-scale invasion, with the exception of those who left deliberately in anticipation of the threat of war.

Such selection made it possible to focus on participants for whom the issue of reproductive choice in wartime conditions is relevant, ensuring maximum compliance with the research criteria.

For the main stage of the study, a questionnaire was developed that included a comprehensive set of questions and scales aimed at an in-depth study of the participants' reproductive intentions. It included:

- Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS) – used to assess the level of acceptance or rejection of uncertain situations, which is an important factor in making decisions about having a child.

- Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale – used to analyze personal attitudes and the level of self-confidence that may influence reproductive intentions.

- Socio-demographic block – included questions that allowed collecting respondents' personal data and classifying them by key parameters.

- Factors influencing the decision to have a child – identified based on the previous, pilot stage of the study, these variables made it possible to identify the main determinants of reproductive intentions in the context of uncertainty.

This combination of research tools made it possible to obtain a comprehensive analysis of the factors that determine reproductive behavior in conditions of war and social instability [4].

## **Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) as a tool for assessing personal confidence**

To measure the level of self-esteem of respondents, the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was used – one of the most widely used and validated psychological instruments (Schmitt, Allik, 2005).

This questionnaire consists of 10 statements, half of which are formulated in a positive way, and the other half – in a negative one. The participants' responses are evaluated on a scale from full agreement to full disagreement, which allows determining the overall level of self-esteem and its intensity.

The scale is a universal tool that has been adapted into dozens of languages and is widely used in different countries around the world (Gnambs, Scharl and Schroeders, 2018). Due to its international validation, it is widely used in psychological research to assess levels of self-confidence, personal resilience, and tendency toward self-criticism.

The translation of the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) was carried out by the Ukrainian Institute of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (UICBT), which ensured its adaptation to the cultural and linguistic context.

This instrument demonstrated high internal consistency, as confirmed by a Cronbach's  $\alpha$  coefficient ranging from 0.8 to 0.9, which indicates the reliability and stability of the scale when applied to different samples (Wongpakaran, Wongpakaran, 2012).

## **Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS) as an indicator of psychological response to instability [6]**

The Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS) is a validated psychological instrument that allows assessment of an individual's tendency to feel discomfort in situations of instability and unpredictability (Birrell, Meares, Wilkinson and Freeston, 2011).

This questionnaire was developed by Buhr and Dugas in 2002 (Sexton, Dugas, 2009) to measure the level of intolerance to uncertainty – a cognitive-emotional response characterized by inability to adapt to change, avoidance of risk, and increased anxiety in the face of unpredictable events.

The IUS is actively used in clinical and research psychology to analyze the impact of uncertainty on decision-making, stress levels, and emotional regulation, which makes it a valuable tool for studying personality adaptation in unstable conditions [3].

### **Structure and evaluation principles of the IUS methodology**

The Intolerance of Uncertainty Scale (IUS) consists of 27 statements aimed at measuring different aspects of uncertainty perception. It evaluates such key indicators as:

- level of anxiety about the future;
- fear of unpredictable events;
- need for stability and life predictability.

Evaluation is carried out using a Likert scale, where respondents indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with the given statements. This makes it possible to examine how much discomfort a person feels due to unknown or unstable situations, as well as to determine their tendency to avoid unpredictable changes in life.

The Ukrainian version of the questionnaire was adapted and validated by specialists from the Ukrainian Institute of Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy, which ensured its compliance with linguistic, cultural, and scientific standards [5].

Studies have shown high internal consistency of the tool, as evidenced by the Cronbach's  $\alpha$  reliability coefficient in the range of 0.8–0.9, confirming its stability and validity for psychological assessment of uncertainty tolerance (Carleton, Norton and Asmundson, 2007).

### **Respondent recruitment procedure and study limitations**

To recruit participants, an information campaign was conducted, which included placing announcements on the research group's social media and spreading information in various thematic Telegram channels with a significant audience. The announcement text clearly stated the inclusion and exclusion criteria, which allowed forming a relevant sample.

In addition, the first part of the questionnaire included informed consent, which implied confirmation of the respondents' voluntary participation and acceptance of the research conditions.

### **Challenges and study limitations:**

- limited sample: the total number of respondents was relatively small, which may affect the representativeness of the results;
- gender imbalance: the ratio of men and women in the sample does not fully reflect the actual demographic situation in Ukraine;
- possible social desirability bias: some participants may have given answers aimed at making a better impression rather than reflecting their real beliefs;
- external factors: wartime conditions and social instability could have influenced the emotional state of respondents, which potentially affected their answers.

Despite these limitations, the results obtained allow a better understanding of the impact of uncertainty on reproductive intentions, as well as outline directions for further research.

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