

# PSYCHOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF MARTIAL JOURNALIST'S PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITY



MAKSYM BALAKLYTSKYI

*V.N.Karazin Kharkiv National University, Kharkiv – Ukraine*

ORCID: 0000-0001-7977-5594

VALENTYNA KURYLIAK

*Ukrainian Institute of Arts and Sciences, Bucha, Kyiv Region – Ukraine*

ORCID: 0000-0001-5245-9700

DOI: 10.25200/BJR.v16n1.2020.1213

Received in: March 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019

Reviewed on: July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Reviewed on: September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019

Approved on: November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2019

**ABSTRACT** – This article addresses the issue of social orders for martial journalists in the context of Joint Forces Operation in the territory of Ukraine, as well as the necessary and growing need for journalists to use their own psychological resources correctly under stressful working conditions. This article draws a distinction between martial and military journalism, reveals the main components of the psychological aspect of a martial journalist's professional activity and delineates research substantiated by scientific evidence. Martial journalism entails the journalist going in the area of hostilities; in military journalism, conversely, the journalist can write from other parts of the country where there are no hostilities. The emphasis is put on the fact that Ukrainian researchers do not pay attention to the psychological health of a martial journalist with state education, in contrast to a military specialist. The authors emphasize that the psychological disfunctions of the martial and military journalists arise because of the specialists who monitor and distribute a large amount of destructive information in the mass media. The psychology of martial journalists was researched using the interviewing method and focused on the psychological and socio-communicative portrait of their personalities. It distinguished between the positive and negative components of their profession and suggested a list of preventive actions to minimize the influence of their activity on their psychological health.

**Key words:** Martial journalist. Psychological portrait. Positive and negative components.

## ANÁLISE PSICOLÓGICA DA ATIVIDADE PROFISSIONAL DOS JORNALISTAS MARCIAIS

**RESUMO** – Este artigo discute a questão das ordens sociais para jornalistas marciais no contexto da Operação de Forças Conjuntas no território da Ucrânia, bem como a crescente e imperiosa necessidade desses jornalistas utilizarem corretamente seus próprios recursos psicológicos sob condições de trabalho estressantes. Faz uma distinção entre jornalismo marcial e militar, revela os componentes principais do aspecto psicológico da atividade profissional dos jornalistas marciais e realiza uma pesquisa substanciada por evidência científica. O jornalismo marcial implica em jornalistas indo a áreas de hostilidade. Já no jornalismo militar, o jornalista pode escrever de outras partes do país onde acontecem as hostilidades. A ênfase é colocada no fato de que os pesquisadores ucranianos não dão atenção à saúde psicológica do jornalista marcial com educação estatal, em contraste com o que acontece com o especialista militar. Os autores enfatizam que as disfunções psicológicas dos jornalistas marciais e dos jornalistas militares surgem por conta da atividade desses especialistas, que monitoram e distribuem uma grande quantidade de informação destrutiva nos meios de comunicação de massa. A psicologia dos jornalistas marciais foi estudada por meio do método de entrevista e se concentrou no perfil psicológico e sociocognitivo de suas personalidades. Distinguiu-se entre os componentes positivos e negativos da profissão e foi sugerida uma lista de ações preventivas para minimizar a influência de suas atividades na saúde psicológica.

**Palavras-chave:** Jornalista marcial. Perfil psicológico. Componentes positivos e negativos.

## ANÁLISIS PSICOLÓGICO DE LA ACTIVIDAD PROFESIONAL DE PERIODISTAS MARCIALES

**RESUMEN** – Este artículo aborda el tema de las órdenes sociales para periodistas marciales en el contexto de la Operación de las Fuerzas Conjuntas en el territorio de Ucrania, así como la necesidad imperiosa y creciente de que los periodistas utilicen correctamente sus propios recursos psicológicos por las condiciones de trabajo estresantes. Este artículo establece una distinción entre periodismo marcial y militar, revela los componentes principales del aspecto psicológico de la actividad profesional de un periodista marcial y delinea la investigación respaldada por evidencia científica. El periodismo marcial corresponde al periodista que acude al área de las hostilidades; en el periodismo militar, por el contrario, el periodista puede escribir desde otras partes del país donde no hay hostilidades. Se hace hincapié en el hecho de que los investigadores ucranianos no prestan atención a la salud psicológica del periodista marcial con educación general, en contraste con un especialista militar. Los autores enfatizan que las disfunciones psicológicas de los periodistas marciales y militares surgen debido a los especialistas que monitorean y distribuyen una gran cantidad de información destructiva en los medios de comunicación. La psicología de los periodistas marciales fue abordada mediante el método de entrevista y se centró en el perfil psicológico y socio-comunicativo de sus personalidades. Se distingue entre los componentes positivos y negativos de su profesión y se sugiere una lista de acciones preventivas para minimizar la influencia de su actividad en su salud psicológica.

**Palabras clave:** Periodista marcial. Perfil psicológico. Componentes positivos y negativos.

### 1 Introduction

In August 2015, due to armed conflict, the Department of Military Journalism was established at the Military Institute of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kiev. The Department of Military Journalism of Ivan Franko National University of Lviv opened the

specialty "Martial Journalism". A Military Journalist Day has been instituted as a Ukrainian holiday and was first celebrated on February 16, 2018 (TCH, 2018). All of this testifies to the public request for this type of multimedia work.

Ukrainian researchers are developing scientific and educational literature to train such specialists. When analyzing these publications, it is necessary to notice the terminological and semantic differences between military and martial journalism. "We clearly distinguish between the term 'military journalist' (the journalist who is in the military service, and was trained in the past by the Lviv Higher Military-Political College, the only one in the former USSR) and 'martial journalists' (civilian journalists who go to the war zone influenced by mass media or on their own initiative), to the 'hot spot' to satisfy the information request of the audience", said Stepan Konstantin (Kost, 2016, p. 302). To draw a clear boundary between the professions of military and martial journalists, we set side by side their practical competences in Table 1.

<b>Military journalists</b>	<b>Martial journalists</b>
Must undergo special training in "military journalism".	Civilians, journalists, correspondents, etc. who do not normally have a military journalist's education.
Provide information to media about martial events regardless of the location of the headquarters.	Inform civilians through the media about the course of a martial or armed conflict only from a war zone or hot spots.
Do not always put their life in danger.	Always put their life in danger as a result of being on the cutting edge.
Prepare information for the media that may contain a variety of content regarding the lives and activities of military units.	Prepare information about the course of events at the battle point: number of killed, advanced war crimes, death toll, etc.
Performing their duties is part of their profession or military service as a result of receiving special educational training of a military officer.	Gathering information in high-risk areas may be driven by a desire to earn a lot of money, as war reports are usually high-paying; a patriotic feeling, or self-interests (hobbies, adrenaline shortages, and other, including family circumstances).

Source: the authors.

The majority of available guides expectedly focus on military media workers – potential officers who will serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine (AFU) (Minochkin, 2006, p.188). In terms of current journalistic standards, the activities of such specialists fall under

the definition of public propaganda and PR of the AFU as a public institution (Zharkov, 2008), and not journalism as an independent source of information for the benefits of society. The main task of military media workers is to protect the territorial integrity of Ukraine, to create a positive image of the AFU and to justify positively the intentions and actions of Ukrainian servicemen in armed, informational and other conflicts.

Instead, we are interested in martial journalism in Ukraine as the work of journalists who go to a combat zone (providing they remain in this zone without joining the wave of settlers), preparing the publications for any type of media (except the media which belong to the Armed Forces of Ukraine). Depending on personal settings and values, the format of the publication, and the nature of the highlighted conflict, the authors of such publications may seek, for example:

- a) to "rise above" the conflict, presenting solid facts and representing the interests and claims of its parties (Zharkov, 2012);
- b) to take a civil (patriotic) position (Kurban, 2016);
- c) to remain in the war zone until the end of the conflict, focusing more on the suffering and loss of civilians.

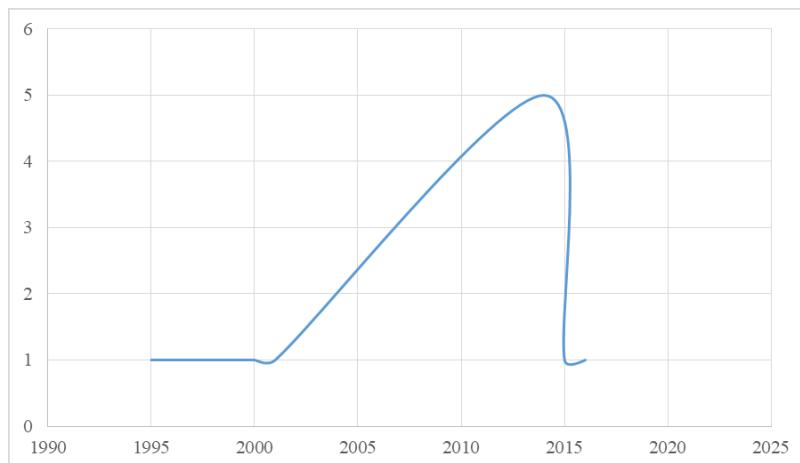
In comparison with military media workers who are military personnel, current martial journalists in Ukraine have a civil background (journalistic or else) and are incomparably less prepared to stay in the combat zone than officers of the Armed Forces. This increases the risk for martial journalists to get injured or die from weapons. The mission of the martial journalists is multifaceted: performing their professional duties requires them to be sensitive, careful and attentive not only to the actions of the officers of the Armed Forces and their morality, but also to the actions of the Ukrainian authorities, trying to understand the conflict as a whole, analyzing its course, development and relevance. To do this, martial journalists often try to show the conflict through the eyes of the civilian population, the international community, authorities and the population of the Separate Regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, as well as the Russian Federation.

The work of martial journalists is complicated by the general transitional nature of the Ukrainian society, failing to see the distinction between propaganda and journalistic flows of information (Herasymenko, 2018, pp. 6–7), the youth of the profession in Ukraine, the need to cover the first armed conflict in its territory since its recent independence, the duration and complexity of its vicissitudes. Particularly in Ukraine,

and in general in the world, more and more freelancers and volunteers who take up such difficult tasks (Smyth, 2012, p.56) do not associate themselves with specific media and publications, but take part in this business at their own risk. Among them, the level of physical and emotional trauma is higher than in regular media workers.

The martial conflict between Ukraine and Russia is accompanied by a sharp increase of violence against journalists: "In 2013–2014 during the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity, at least 206 journalists were wounded in Kyiv, mainly because they were viewed as targets" (Aleshchenko, 2007, p.8). In 2014, during the active phase of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine, five journalists died in the territory of Ukraine performing their professional duties. This became the basis for the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) to include Ukraine, along with Syria, Iraq, Israel, Somalia and Pakistan, in the list of countries that are the most dangerous for working in the Mass Media (Committee to Protect Journalists). According to the results of statistical data posted on the Committee to Protect Journalists in Ukraine, since 1995, 13 journalists have died: for eight of those, the perpetrators were convicted for murder; the remaining five were murdered with impunity.

**Graph 1** – Journalists killed in Ukraine since 1995



Source: Committee to Protect Journalists.

As a matter of fact, the level of physical threat against journalists is quite high, not only in wars, but also in various emergency situations. Security guides for journalists include: the risk

assessment and measures to reduce it; a comprehensive safety plan analysis; security and weapons; sexual violence; hostage-taking; response to threats. Journalistic tasks of increased danger include the armed conflicts, organized crime and corruption, civil unrests and disorder, natural disasters, epidemics and other sources of massive health threats. Experts claim: "Death penalty executions, shootings, terrorist bombings, rapes, child sexual abuse, domestic violence, suicide and intimidation – all of these may cause reporters to feel intense stress" (Sosnovskaia, 2005, p.56).

We must talk not only about physical, but also psychological threats and the high level of stress in the work of a martial journalist. However, if the protection of the mental health of military personnel (and, hopefully, war correspondents) is a priority for specialists (Sosnovskaia, 2005, p.56), the question of a psychological portrait (Suprun, 2009, p.73) of martial journalists has not yet attracted the attention of Ukrainian researchers.

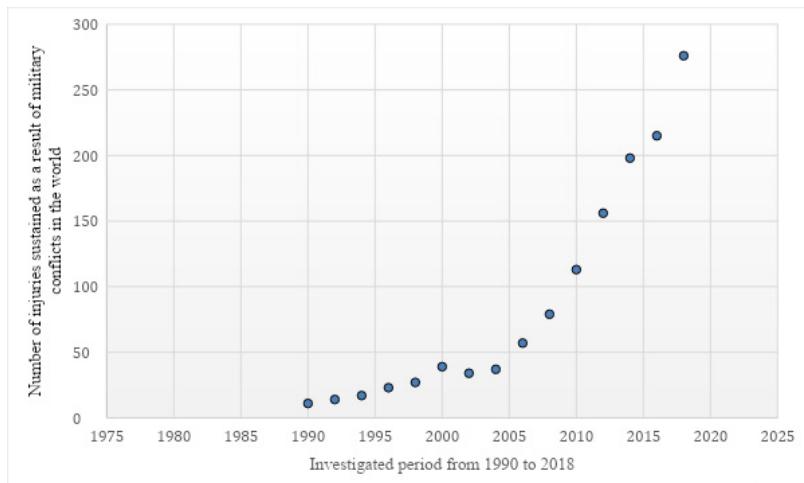
Therefore, the purpose of our article is to determine the psychological aspects of the professional activity of martial journalists.

It is known that Western scholars have recently drawn attention to the psychological specificities of the profession of martial journalists. They argue that the history of the newest wars before the World War II (another opinion points out the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989) (Foerstel, 2006, .25), was an incomparably safe time for martial journalists. These were conflicts between countries with relatively clear borders and ideological positions. For instance, the military-political bloc of the Axis countries and their allies against the anti-Hitler coalition, the Eastern Bloc led by the USSR against the Western Bloc led by NATO and the United States.

However, the recent history of wars was particularly marked by the Gulf War (1990–1991) which gave rise to the well-known "CNN effect", and the global war on terrorism, unofficially beginning on September 11, 2001 (Cottle et. al., 2016, p.2), opened a new, much more threatening page for martial journalists. Current wars are extraterritorial, often involving more than two warring parties; combatants do not always have uniforms and do not differ much from the civilian population. Under such conditions, war coverage has become much more complex and dangerous. Above all, more and more journalists become the targets of intentional violence in recent wars. Graph 2 shows us the dynamic growth of violence against journalists worldwide from 1990 to 2014. In total, about

three hundred martial journalists died during the world military conflicts that stretched from 1990 to 2018 (Cottle et al., 2016, p.3). This tendency shows that, as a result of dangerous situations (unpredictable in most cases), the profession of a martial journalist not only threatens the psychological health of a specialist, but also the life of a journalist.

**Graph 2** – The worldwide growth of violence against martial journalists



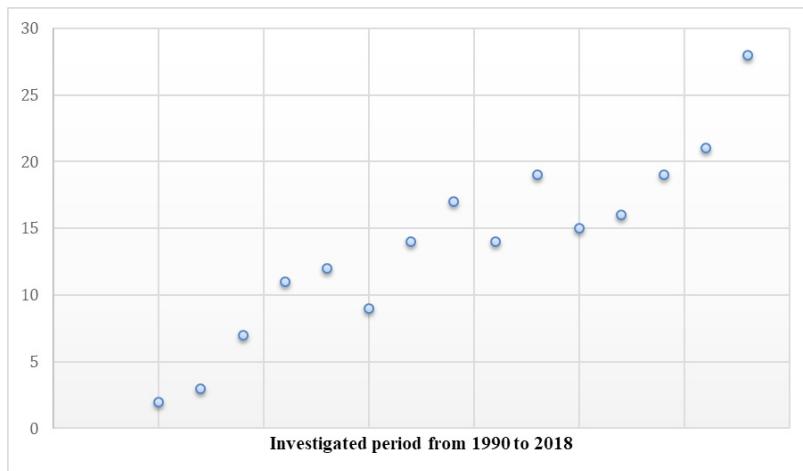
Source: the authors.

It is possible to understand when a military journalist dies from external factors that are beyond control, but how is the significant number of suicides among the representatives of the "Martial Journalist" profession justified? Graph 3 shows the number of journalists (28) who committed suicide in the world between 1990 to 2018. This tendency is particularly significant among martial and crime journalists.

The end of the American television news reporter Christine Chubbuck's career is an example of the toxic impact of stressful topics on journalists. She committed suicide on a live TV show in 1974. In addition to her personal psychological problems (low self-esteem, personal failures), it is very likely that her immersion in the lives of social outsiders prepared her to go from the potential to the actual. Several years earlier, she had specialized in covering a

criminal chronicle for ABC – reports of fights, robberies, rapes, street shootings. The television executives constantly demanded more shocking, bloodier reports, arguing that all viewers are sadists and murderers at heart.

**Graph 3** – The increase in the number of suicides in the world among military and crime journalists



Source: the authors.

Furthermore, psychiatrist Frank Ochberg opened the way in the early 1990s to a mission which gave birth to the Dart Center for Journalism and Trauma, a project now carried out by Columbia University since 2009: it is a leading institution that is trying to break the conspiracy of silence around the psychological problems of journalists that cover disastrous events and scenes of violence. Experts seek to overcome the so-called macho newsroom culture, which prevents journalists from disclosing having psychological disorders, for fear of disqualification.

A number of studies systematically implemented since the early 2000s have shown that a range of psychological problems are specifically inherent in martial journalism. Almost a third of the polled specialists had a severe form of psychological consequences from working in the fields of military operations (Hight, 2004, p.29). “In a study conducted by German scientists Teigen and Grotwinkel in the United States and Europe in 2001, almost 15% of journalists who were interviewed showed signs of extreme stress or mental illness”

(Feinstein, 2006, p.56). The level of psychological vulnerability of martial journalists exceeds the corresponding figures among police officers and firefighters, as it approaches the level of stress usually experienced by war veterans (Feinstein et al., 2002, p.159).

Psychological disorders of journalists who report on violence and disasters fall under three main forms: re-experiencing, hyperarousal, avoidance or emotional numbness. After stress, journalists return again and again to the experienced events, mentally re-experiencing them. They become irritable, nervous, frightened, and lose the ability to concentrate. Finally, nervous fatigue is expressed through the loss of interest in social relationships, seclusion, and indifference to the outside world (Matviets, 2017, p.44).

The emotional disturbances associated with these emotions, known as the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), are characterized by the impossibility to look beyond the situation, to forget the negative experience of being in the combat zone, or less frequently, to work with records, especially audiovisual, war crimes and disasters.

Researchers classify journalists who cover military conflicts under the social groups that are more likely to have such psychological disorders (Javidi & Yadollahie, 2012, pp.8–10). However, the weight and significance of such stress is often underestimated in the case of journalists, in contrast to other risky professions (Matviets, 2017, p. 26). Those disorders may include journalists blaming themselves for seeing evident injustices and crimes, but having no right (or ability) to intervene (Simpson & Boggs, 1999).

The essence of the psychological state of the martial journalist is described as (potential) trauma. Besides PTSD, depression is also expected to rise (Browne et al., 2012), as well as a loss of compassion (Backholm & Björkqvist, 2012, p.25).

Of the twenty-one symptoms of the Beck Depression Inventory, those most often reported by the war [journalists – M. B.] group included sadness, the perception of past failure, the loss of pleasure, guilty feelings, self-criticism, suicidal thoughts or wishes, crying, loss of interest, indecisiveness, a change in sleep pattern, irritability, and loss of interest in sex. Pessimism, agitation, and change in appetite were also reported, though less frequently (Gretchen, 2011, p.73).

Often, journalists reduce the stress by smoking tobacco, drinking alcohol of varying strength and dose, and taking drugs of different severity from cannabis to cocaine (Feinstein & Nicolson, 2005, pp. 129– 132).

Not only do martial journalists suffer, but those in their environment do, too. PTSD causes conflicts with colleagues and authorities, but those who suffer the most are the relatives of the media workers. Half of the martial journalists interviewed were single or divorced (Frank & Perigoe, 2009, p.36). The extreme forms of the emotional states of psychologically disturbed journalists are: tears, anger, rage, euphoria, frustration, hatred and love.

The situation worsens even more, if the martial journalist was influenced by divorced or neglectful parents when deciding to choose this career: a military father who did not pay enough attention to his family and the communication with his children, and the consequent inability of the young person to adapt to his/her environment. Overcoming such a condition often requires not only a psychologist's assistance, but also the help of doctors. Colleagues also play an important role (Woehrlin, 1971, p.17).

Despite these factors, more and more journalists desire to cover acts of violence and disaster, as they consider them an important mission that raises public awareness, empowers governments and societies to influence a conflict, and ideally impact mutual understanding between people.

## **2 Methodology of the study**

To achieve our goals and objectives, we have used a set of general scientific methods. The combination of induction, deduction, and analogy methods enabled us to substantiate the research topic and draw general conclusions based on the collected facts about martial journalism in Ukraine. The classification method helped to establish links and patterns between the psychological aspect of the journalist's personality and martial journalism. This direct understanding of the influence of martial journalism on their personalities was obtained by means of a questionnaire designed to capture the modern psychological portrait of a martial journalist.

To build such a portrait, a special inquiry was conducted, which allowed us, based on the obtained data, to draw up a real psychological portrait of a martial journalist's personality. Forty-three journalists (domestic and foreign) who are directly involved in the field of martial journalism took part in the survey, namely those covering the events in hot spots and war zones. Accordingly, the background

of the respondents was the following: 34 martial journalists from Ukraine working in the combat zone in the territories of Donetsk and Luhansk regions from 2014 to 2019 (18 of them were journalists with a degree who had been involved in public-journalism before the war); nine military personnel who, as a result of circumstances, were forced to transmit the information about the course of war to the media; three civilians who had never been involved in the media but, since the outbreak of hostilities, have become actively involved in the exchange of information between military units and civilians who are directly involved in the events and reside in the war zone. As it turned out, only two of the respondents have specialized military training and work as martial journalists on duty; nine of the interviewees are martial journalists who work or worked before in hot spots abroad and have five years of experience in gathering information.

In order to identify the psychological aspect (the main components of the psychological portrait) of the martial journalist personality, we used the data of such questionnaires as the multifactor personality questionnaire "Freiburg Personality Inventory" (FPI) which established the basic psychological characteristics that each military journalist should possess because of their profession. On the basis of T. Leary's questionnaire, we diagnosed the interpersonal relationships and individual peculiarities of interaction between each interviewed martial journalist and his/her colleagues and surroundings. We also determined the components of the psychological aspect of the current martial journalist resorting to an interactive test.

The experimental survey was conducted in four stages. The first stage (2017) determined the relevance and the formulation of the problem and tasks of the research objectives, the theoretical and methodological analysis of its object and subject, the analysis of Ukrainian and foreign scientific sources on the topic of military and martial journalism. The second stage (2018) consisted of establishing contact with the available martial journalists and interviewing them. The third stage focused on generalizing the results of the theoretical and methodological analysis, verifying the basic units of a martial journalist's psychological portrait on the basis of the processing and analysis of the study results, formulation of theoretical conclusions and practical recommendations. The use of the synthesis method also helped to summarize the scientific information and confirm the experimental studies with a theoretical component.

### **3 The main results of the study**

According to the results of the study, the interviewed martial journalists had been affected by:

- a strong tie built between negative information and emotional state: in most cases, after preparing the report, a military journalist was filled with negative emotions (irritation, sadness, nervousness) that were overflowing or overwhelming; R = 87% of respondents mentioned this aspect;
- the impact of their working conditions (field conditions) on their physical condition, namely: their difficulty to focus on having a rest after reporting or writing articles about human sacrifices and cruelty. R = 81% answered positively;
- a lack of desire to make new acquaintances with colleagues and others because of constant circulation of reports on the number of military and martial soldiers and others who died, the constant suffering and death of civilians as a result of fighting on their territory – R = 79% reported such a psychological state. Moreover, one of the interviewed martial journalists wrote the following in his questionnaire: "When preparing particularly difficult reports about the death of servicemen or civilians, I begin to worry about my family. As a result, I begin to overcontrol them with frequent calls. I constantly ask my wife where the children are, what they are doing, whether she has taught them the way to deal with crisis situations properly, and so on. This excitement becomes an obsessive thought that my family is in danger."

R = 91% of those who have more than two years of experience in working reported an inability to control their emotions. At the same time, R = 61% respondents with more than two years of experience in working indicated that they began to express such emotions as: pity, compassion, understanding to the suffering of their neighbors and the desire to mitigate their pain. The reason of this morale state is the great amount of plots with human cruelty and crime. According to one of the respondents: "My first publications caused me a great desire to punish those who bring grief and sufferings to people, to help those who suffer innocently, but eventually I realized that I will not be able to help everyone and that is my job to write about the war and its crimes, and over time pity and sympathy disappeared". That is R = 41% of those polled.

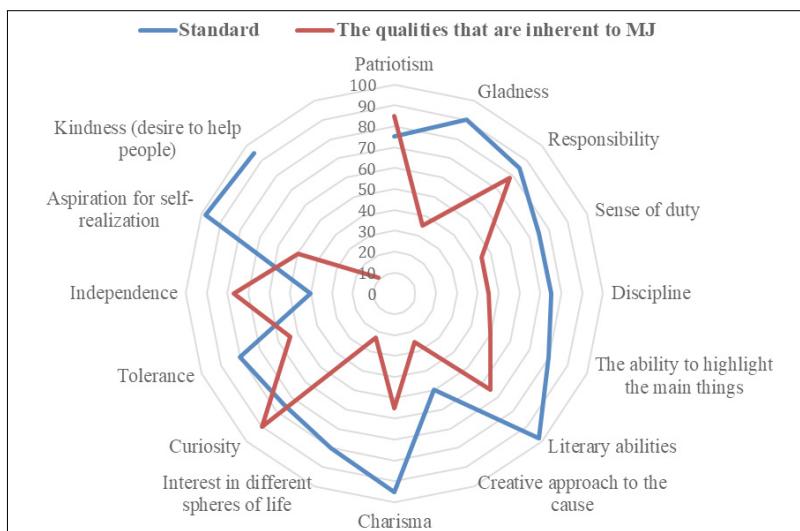
These results indicate that a martial journalist personality is too depressed, inclined to constant emotional fluctuations, annoyed and emotionally unstable in the issues of building personal relationships with relatives, friends and colleagues.

According to the results of a personal test, it is worth paying attention to the aggressive manifestations of a martial journalist to themselves. The question "Do you have a desire to strike this person if you are very annoyed?", 13% of the respondents answered positively, but they never did it. And the question "Do you have a desire to kill yourself because of this cruel planet at the moment when you are very sad/depressed?", 92% agreed (one year of working experience and more).

Consequently, as a result of a comprehensive analysis of the psychological component of the "aggression", it has been established that a martial journalist is capable of aggressive behaviour towards others in stressful situations, but in time of crisis, the greatest peak of its influence falls on them alone.

In addition, the processed results of the Freiburg multifactor personality questionnaire consist of a general portrait of a martial journalist personality, which includes the main components of a military journalist personality as a specialist in his field.

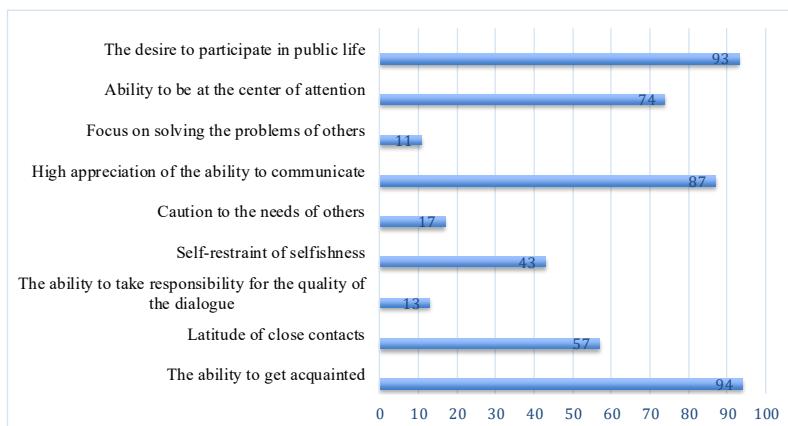
#### **Graph 4 – Psychological portrait of a martial journalist as a specialist**



Source: the authors.

In Graph 4, it is evident that such qualities of humanity as natural kindness, desire to help others and vivacity have the lowest percentages. Most likely, this is due to the fact that almost every day MJ is exposed to the opposite qualities. Compassion is replaced by cruelty, murder and injustice, and cheerfulness is occupied by negative emotions generated by non-natural factors (aggression against others). Based on the results of the applied T. Leary questionnaire (Graph 5), a socially-communicative portrait of a military journalist, which reflects the percentage of interactions with the others, has resulted.

**Graph 5 – Social and communicative portrait of a martial journalist**



Source: The authors.

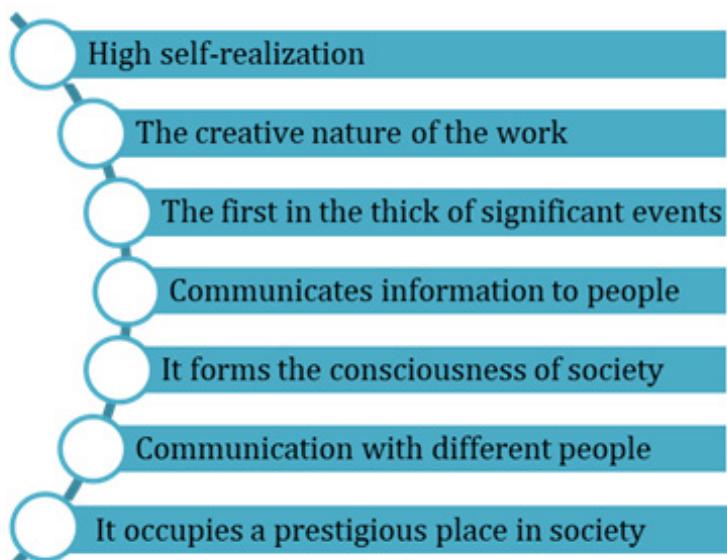
According to the results of the research (Graph 5), the majority of MJs are interested in the issues of society and wish to participate in its transformation for the better. They are able to make new acquaintances in order to obtain useful information and especially they appreciate the respondents' ability to communicate. Negative side of internal and external communication of MJs is seen in little attention paid at needs of people, who surround them, as well as in the lack of ability to assume responsibility for the quality of a dialogue that does not have anything in common with their work, but it occurs in a circle of friends and relatives. In addition, only 17% of respondents indicated that they pay attention to the needs of others, even if they do not profit from it in any way.

A special interactive test was made specifically to establish the components of the psychological aspect of a MJ personality. The test consisted of 90 statements (expressions) grouped into three positions – a total of 30. In each position, the respondent had to choose one statement which, according to their opinion, reflected the essence of their profession.

For example, one of the statements was formed as follows. "The profession of a military journalist affects my psychological health": a. positively; b. negatively; c. does not affect. As a result, 86% of respondents said that their profession is harmful to their psychological health. The following statement was also made as one of the control questions. "Violence and war stories affect you as an author": a. Strongly affect; b. Do not affect; c. Sometimes cause deep anxiety in me. The option "sometimes cause me deep anxiety" was noted by 100% of respondents.

It is interesting that each block of statements contained a negative, positive and neutral component of the martial journalist's profession. As a result of processing the results of the interactive questionnaire, the following was established: 12 marks were put on positive aspects of activity (Figure 1); 24 marks out of 43 received negative statements from the respondents (Figure 2); only 7 marks remained neutral according to the chosen profession of martial journalist. It was interesting that 24 respondents who marked more negative components of their profession had four years of experience; 12 respondents who chose most of the positive traits of the profession had no more than three years of experience; seven marks of neutral character ("I do not choose any variant") were put by the respondents who have less than one year of experience, and only one of them was 2.5 years. Thus, Figure 1 shows the main positive features of the military journalist's profession. As a result, we can make the following statement. The longer the journalist's experience in a military conflict, the more s/he begins to see the negative aspects of his/her chosen profession.

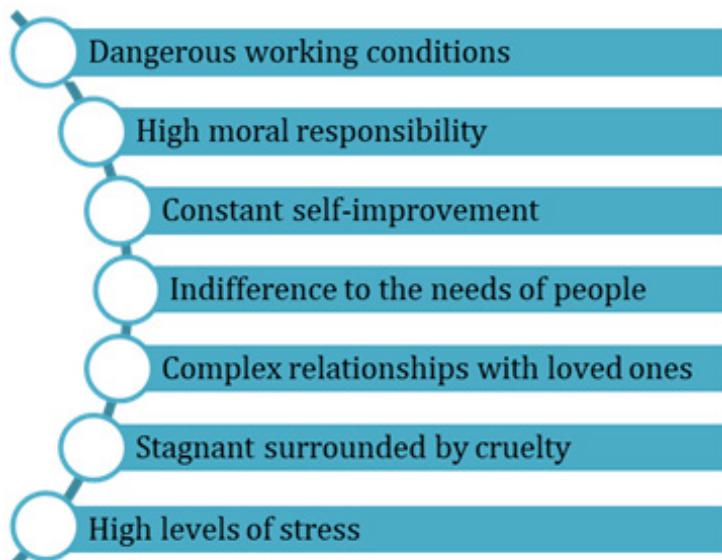
**Figure 1** – Positive components of a military journalist profession



Source: the authors.

It is difficult to deny that the profession of MJ, regardless of the negative aspects, has no positive qualities. One of the features of this profession is constant communication of a specialist (through the media) with the community. Media workers, and not historians, are shaping in real time the consciousness of individuals, a nation and the whole world due to small publications that are important and necessary to everyone, who are interested or involved in a military conflict. But, considering the entire positive spectrum of the MJ profession, we observe an equivalent dangerous tendency, which is caused by negative nuances of an MJ's profession. Extreme stress and harsh working conditions lead to the fact that more and more MJs are on the verge of psychological breakdown, which at any moment can lead to fatal consequences.

**Figure 2** – Negative components of the psychological portrait of a martial journalist



Source: The authors

One of the samples of negative components has the item “constant self-improvement”. This means that, as a rule, a martial journalist cannot know the way the course of events will unfold, the best way to present objective information to the public, to occupy the first page of well-known Ukrainian (or foreign) editions. This is quite a difficult task, since competition among the MJs is quite fierce. For example, several martial journalists may work in the same territory where open combat operations take place. And constant self-improvement regarding the submission of the texts requires the MJs to work in fierce competition, which is accompanied by extremely harsh working conditions.

The military conflict in Eastern Ukraine has been lasting longer than any other military conflict ever to occur in Ukraine during the twentieth century. Fortunately, the number of casualties among the military and civilians in the current conflict is far lower than the previous wars in these territories. According to the findings of Timothy Snyder (Snyder, 2012), from 1933–1945 Ukraine was the most dangerous place on the Earth. In it and the surrounding territories that were involved in the martial conflict, 12 million people have been killed within 12 years. At the same

time, the UN estimated that since 2014, 13,000 people were killed and 30,000 were wounded because of martial conflict in Eastern Ukraine, and the main losses are because of infrastructure destruction (estimated cost of US\$50 billion) and US\$1.2 billion migrants. At the same time, military operations cover at least 10% of the country's territory.

Social Communication Doctor Alexander Kurban (Ukrainian specialist in the field of warfare information during the hybrid war) (Ponomarenko, 2019) states that at the beginning of this conflict Ukraine did not lose nor win in the hybrid war with the Russian Federation. According to him, Ukraine simply did not participate in this war. Her attempts to repel, particularly in the information field, began only when it became clear who initiated the aggression. The minimum task under these conditions is the duration of the conflict, the weakness of the Ukrainian reaction to the propaganda pressure from Russia, to inform the population of Ukraine, and further the world, about the status and course of events of the military conflict in the Donbas. This creates public demand for two kinds of media-worker activities: military and martial journalists.

Thus, working under harsh conditions, Ukrainian and other hot spots' martial journalists constantly inform the population of negative information and, over time, they become indifferent to the people around them. This leads to tense relationships with relatives who do not always understand the causes of the depressed mood of a person whose profession is martial journalism. Besides that, tense working conditions force the MJs to be in constant moral and psychological pressure, which can be expressed through aggressive actions against others and themselves.

#### **4 Conclusions**

As a result of the study, we can draw the following conclusions: the profession of a martial journalist is and remains one of the most dangerous in the world, as it brings psychological and physical health threats to mass media specialists who are not ready to face real hostilities. Once again, we emphasize that we distinguish these two media professions. A military journalist is a promoter of Ukraine, an official representative of the Armed

Forces of Ukraine, and a martial journalist is a representative of the public, society, and the media sphere, who should seek to give an unbiased picture of the arena of hostilities. A serious challenge for the young Ukrainian journalism is the novelty of the fighting situation, the need to cover military violence that occurs in his/her own territory, the lack of professional requirements for the journalist's profession.

As for extreme right forces of Ukrainian society – the nationalist circles, even under Poroshenko's rule, maintained the highest level of protest activity in Ukrainian society – demanding to unite all resources, including informational, to mobilize Ukraine against Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine. From the extreme right's point of view, a military conflict is the reality, and Poroshenko's refusal to call it war is a verbal sophistication, an attempt to conceal the truth. Therefore, the Ukrainian mass media ought not to change the objectivity. Their main goal as a part of the Ukraine is to take care for its victory over its northern neighbor. Such ideological extremes challenge Ukrainian journalists, who mostly are just beginning to follow the professional standards of Western media. In the West these standards cannot be called a monolithic standard as well, if we will mention the growing bias of authoritative media in activism (public campaigns for tolerance of the LGBT community, for example) or propaganda (a relevant case here is overt promotion of Hillary Clinton for the US President in 2016 rally, exercised by renowned Western mass media).

Covering the conflict in the Donbas they observe that psychological pressure caused by the violent scenes is accompanied by Ukrainian journalists' moral confusion. Misunderstanding the rules of the game, allegations of corruption and "contractors" of the warring parties, extreme subjectivity of conflict eyewitnesses, especially among the civilian population, evidence of the symmetry of methods of military action on both sides, including the use of the civilian population as a human shield and potential target, cause martial journalists, most of whom have not been specifically trained in such activities, a number of psychological disorders that have many features in common with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

The internal problems of such specialists are accompanied by external dangers. Ukrainian history after the Euromaidan has shown a sharp increase of violence against journalists. And outside the Donbas,

Ukrainian journalists are intimidated, pressured, tried to be bribed or defamed, subjected to beatings or assassinations, which sometimes result in the death of media workers (remember the resonant murder of TV journalist Pavlo Sheremet on July 20, 2016 in Kyiv).

The life stories of Ukrainian military reporters once again emphasize how the profession of "war journalist" harms them. For example, Roman Sushchenko, on September 30, 2016, was detained by the FSB of Russia on charges of espionage in favor of Ukraine. On June 4, 2018, a court in Moscow announced the sentence to Roman Sushchenko. He received 12 years of a high-security colony. Stanislav Aseev (Vasin) was arrested in 2014 and sentenced by a Russian court to 20 years in prison. Stanislav Klich, a journalist captured by DPR fighters in June 2017, was sentenced to 12 years in prison. Mykola Semena, a Crimean journalist, was charged in 2016 with appeals for violation of the integrity of the Russian Federation and sentenced to 2.5 years of probation.

Attempting to understand these challenges has prompted the authors of this article to appeal to the worldwide experience of psychological training of martial journalists for performing professional tasks, as well as rehabilitation of potential disorders. The analyzed data have shown that the pattern of psychological burdens of this profession are a global trend. Martial journalists generally are not able to remain impartial observers of hostilities. According to the degree of psychological affliction, they are close to the war participants. The haunting memories of the seen horrors prevent martial journalists from concentrating on the present. Such experts seem to be stuck in the past, suffering from cyclical experiences of former war crimes. Their colleagues suffer. But, most of all, relatives and loved ones do. The use of chemical tranquilizers such as alcohol or drugs only make the problem worse. To study the psychological profile of these specialists, we conducted a four-stage survey of 43 martial journalists working in the Donbas conflict zone. During the study, the authors used the data from the specialized journal inquirer "Freiburg Multifactor Personal Questionnaire", the information of Timothy Leary's questionnaire and the results of the test.

The results show that the personality of a martial journalist is too depressed, prone to constant emotional fluctuations, angry and emotionally unstable when it comes to building personal relationships with relatives, friends and colleagues. A martial journalist may show

aggression to others in stressful situations, but in times of crisis, the greatest peak of his influence falls on himself.

Daily replication of destructive information leads to serious psychological disorders that destroy the martial journalist's family circle. The survey showed the easing of the social intelligence of martial journalist, the lacking, even in their own estimations, of the ability to engage in dialogue with others and to care for their needs beyond their professional responsibilities.

Also, the data revealed the dangerous level of psychological strain of these specialists, their inability to relieve this stress in a constructive and safe (ideally healthy) way. Feelings of kindness and desire for good for others gradually are substituted by depression, frustration and persecution, as constant monitoring of the brutal actions of people in the hostilities zone destroys the inner world of a martial journalist.

Despite the fact that the study showed that the profession of a military journalist is dangerous for the psychological and physical health of a person in Ukraine, there will be a great demand for it in the coming years. The stressfulness of this profession, as well as the threat of a negative psychological climate and the family unity of these professionals, brings the need for cultivation of family traditions and leads to a constructive interaction between the family of a martial journalist and his professional environment. Colleagues should provide a journalist and his or her relatives with the knowledge, skills and facilities for psychological unloading, and the family should prepare for possible manifestations of PTSD and seek qualified external help from experts, rather than relying on their own amateur efforts, the failure of which will endanger family unity, children's interests and the continued ability of a military journalist to cope with the negative manifestations of his or her profession.

## REFERENCES

Aleshchenko, V., Safin, O., & Potapchuk, Ye. (2007). *Orhanizatsiya zabezpechennia zberezhennia psykhichnoho zdorovia viiskovosluzhbovtiv*. Kyiv: Ranok.

Backholm, K., & Björkqvist, K. (2012). The mediating effect of depression between exposure to potentially traumatic events and

PTSD in news journalists. *European Journal of Psychotraumatology*, 3(1). DOI: 10.3402/ejpt.v3i0.18388

Browne, T., Evangelisti, M., & Greenberg, N. (2012). Trauma-related guilt and posttraumatic stress among journalists. *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 25, 207-210. DOI: 10.1002/jts.21678

Committee to Protect Journalists – Defending Journalists Worldwide. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://cpj.org/>

Cottle, S., Sambrook, R., & Mosdell, N. (2016). *Reporting dangerously: journalist killings, intimidation and security*. Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Feinstein, A. (2006). *Journalists under fire: the psychological hazards of covering war*. Maryland: The Johns Hopkins University Press.

Feinstein, A., & Nicolson, D. (2005). Embedded journalists in the Iraq war: Are they at greater psychological risk? *Journal of Traumatic Stress*, 18(2), 129-132. DOI: 10.1002/jts.20020

Feinstein, A., Owen, J., & Blair, N. (2002). A hazardous profession: war, journalists, and psychopathology. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 159(9), 1570-1575. DOI: 10.1176/appi.ajp.159.9.1570

Foerstel, H. (2006). *Killing the messenger: journalists at risk in modern warfare*. Annotated edition edition, Westport: Praeger.

Gretchen, D. (2011). Factors contributing to PTSD and compassion fatigue in television news workers. *International Journal of Business, Humanities and Technology*, 1(1), 22-32. Retrieved from [www.ijbhtnet.com/journals/Vol\\_1\\_No.1\\_July\\_2011/3.pdf](http://www.ijbhtnet.com/journals/Vol_1_No.1_July_2011/3.pdf)

Herasymenko, M. (2018). *Navchalnyi posibnyk z natsionalno-patriotychnoi pidhotovky osobovoho skladu Zbroinykh Syl Ukrayiny na 2018 navchalnyi rik*. Kyiv: Naukovo-doslidnyi tsentr humanitarnykh problem Zbroinykh Syl Ukrayiny. Retrieved from <http://www.hups.mil.gov.ua/assets/uploads/library/nadhodzhennya/january-march-2018/28.pdf>

Hight, J. (2004). *Tragedies & journalists: a guide for more effective coverage*. New York City: Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma.

Javidi, H., & Yadollahie, M. (2012). Post-traumatic stress disorder. *The International Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 3(1), 2-9. Retrieved from [www.theijoem.com/ijoem/index.php/ijoem/article/view/127](http://www.theijoem.com/ijoem/index.php/ijoem/article/view/127)

Kluban, O. (2016). *Suchasni komunikatsiino-kontentni protsesy v bezpekovii sferi*. Kyiv: Viiskovyi instytut Kyivskoho natsionalnoho universytetu imeni Tarasa Shevchenka.

Kost, S. (2016). *Zhurnalistyka i viina*. Lviv: Lvivskyi natsionalnyi universytet imeni Ivana Franka.

Matviiets, L. (2017). Organizatsiia ta monitorynh svoiechasnoho nadannia medykopsykholohichnoi dopomohy na pervynnomu rivni pry hostrykh ta posttravmatychnykh stresovykh rozladakh. *Simeina medytsyna*, 2, 6-10.

Minochkin, A. (2006). *Informatsiina bezpeka suchasnoho suspilstva*. Kyiv: Kyivskyi politekhnichnyi instytut.

Ponomarenko, I. (2019, Jan. 22). *United Nations: 13,000 killed, 30,000 injured in Donbas since 2014*. Kyiv Post. Retrieved from [www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/united-nations-13000-killed-30000-injured-in-donbas-since-2014.html](http://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/united-nations-13000-killed-30000-injured-in-donbas-since-2014.html)

Simpson, R. A., & Boggs, J. G. (1999). An Exploratory Study of Traumatic Stress among Newspaper Journalists. *Journalism & Communication Monographs*, 1(1), 1–26. doi: 10.1177/152263799900100102

Smyth, F. (2012). *Journalist security guide. Covering the news in a dangerous and changing world*. New York City: Committee to Protect Journalists.

Snyder, T. (2012). *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*. Basic Books.

Suprun, L. (2009). Sotsialno-psykholohichnyi i mentalnyi portret zhurnalistika. *Zhurnalistyka*, 8(33), 59-67.

TCH (2018, Feb 16). V Ukraini zapochatkovano Den viiskovoho zhurnalistika. Retrieved from <https://tsn.ua/ato/v-ukraini-zapochatkovano-den-viyskovogo-zhurnalista-1111155.html>

Woehrlin, W. (1971). *Chernyshevskii: the man and the journalist*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Zharkov, Ya. (2008). *Informatsiina bezpeka osobystosti, suspilstva, derzhavy*. Kyiv: Vydavnychiy tsentr Kyivskyi universytet.

Zharkov, Ya. (2012). *Istoriia informatsiino-psykholohichnoho protyborstva*. Kyiv: Sluzhba bezpeky Ukrayiny.

**MAKSYM BALAKLYTSKYI.** Ph.D. (Doctor of Sciences) in Social Communications, professor of Journalism department, V.N.Karazin Kharkiv National University. E-mail: m.balaklytskyi@karazin.ua

**VALENTYNA KURYLIAK.** Ph.D., lecturer of Economic Cybernetics, Finance and Management department, Ukrainian Institute of Arts and Sciences. E-mail dek.den@ugi.edu.ua