

IMPACT OF RESILIENCE ON STABILITY COMMANDER'S EMOTIONAL STABILITY

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Purpose: The main purpose of the article is to present issues related to the effective building of mental resilience (resilience), in the socio-professional situations of commanders, to prevent professional burnout or other risks of military service.

Design/methodology/approach: Given the purpose of the article, a study of the literature was conducted, as well as the application of relevant research methods. The survey was conducted with a sample of 141 military students in February-March 2025. The selection of the sample was random. Within the framework of the considerations carried out, it was decided to use a survey as a research methodology, while the research tool used within this method was a standardized survey questionnaire.

Research limitations/implications: It would certainly be worth repeating representative surveys in the future, among military students because of the changing environment, in the context of security.

Practical implications: The importance of building mental toughness (resilience) in various situations. The article also highlights factors that promote better decision-making by the commander, as well as affect the morale of subordinates, creating an atmosphere of trust and support.

Originality/value: The article addresses the timely and relevant topic of building mental resilience, the ability to cope with difficulties, adapt to changing conditions, and the ability to maintain emotional balance in the face of stress, all of which are key to successfully leading a team of people (a subdivision).

Keywords: resilience, mental toughness, emotional stability, emotion management.

Category of the paper: Research paper.

1. Introduction

As a social being, humans are exposed to a variety of stressors that can lead to stress and depression. Modern life is characterized by many challenges, such as social pressure, interpersonal relationships, work and career, technology and social media, and crisis situations.

Despite the above challenges, not all people experience chronic stress or depression. Much depends on individual psychological resources, coping strategies, social support and emotion management skills. People who are able to build healthy relationships, enjoy the support of loved ones, and take care of their mental health can better cope with the challenges of living in society. It is also worth emphasizing the importance of mental health prevention and the availability of psychological help.

The theoretical part realized the theoretical goal of a comprehensive literature review of mental resilience (resilience), in socio-occupational situations, as well as stress management issues. In the second part of the study, empirical research was presented, and the cognitive objective was realized. For this purpose, a survey method was used. An important value of the conducted research is the attention to issues such as stress and depression, which have become key topics that affect the efficiency of the organization and the well-being of its employees, including commanders.

2. Literature review

Stress is a physical or chemical, emotional factor (such as trauma, allergen or fear) to which the body cannot sufficiently adapt and which causes physiological tensions that may be beneficial to the body or contribute to an outbreak of disease (...). A stress factor, a stress stimulus, is a stressor (Sekścińska, 2011; Streulau, 2024). Depression, on the other hand, is a morbid despondency, an inhibition, to varying degrees, of mental activity manifested in general despondency and frequent delusional inhibitions (Shevchuk, 1985; Gembalska-Kwiecień, 2022).

It is worth noting that it is possible to be depressed and not experience high levels of stress, and it is also possible to experience high levels of stress without depression. Depression is a complex disorder that can occur with different symptoms and under different circumstances:

- depression without high levels of stress - some people can be depressed due to biological factors, such as chemical imbalances in the brain, genetic or hormonal problems. They may not experience intense external stress, and their depression may be due to internal emotional or mental problems.
- High levels of stress without depression - on the other hand, stress can result from various life situations, such as work, interpersonal relationships or financial problems. A person may be highly stressed, but not necessarily depressed. Stress can be temporary and not lead to long-term health problems if a person can effectively cope with difficulties.

It is worth noting that stress and depression can intersect, and long-term stress can increase the risk of depression. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to one's mental well-being and seek support when needed (Bialczyk, 2023).

Resilience, or the ability to cope with adversity as it arises in life or as others understand it-mental resilience is the aspect that allows anyone to adapt to changing conditions and recover from crises (Heller, 2024; Hanson, Hanson, 2022).

Considering the much-desired emotional stability of any commander, especially during the occurrence of crises or day-to-day military leadership, resilience affects, among other things, several aspects, such as:

- stress management - commanders who demonstrate high levels of resilience are better equipped to deal with pressure and stress, allowing them to make more rational decisions in difficult situations,
- emotional intelligence - resilience often goes hand in hand with emotional intelligence, allowing commanders to better understand themselves and others, and thus manage their teams more effectively,
- adaptability - in dynamic operational conditions, the ability to adapt quickly is crucial. Resilient commanders are able to respond flexibly to changing circumstances, which increases their effectiveness,
- motivation and commitment - commanders with high resilience are often more motivated and committed, which affects team morale and overall performance.
- social support - resilience fosters strong interpersonal relationships, Commanders who are able to support their subordinates create an atmosphere of trust, resulting in better cooperation and efficiency within the team,
- skill development - resilience supports the process of learning from mistakes. Commanders who can learn from failures and difficult experiences become better leaders.

Of critical importance, in the above context, is the ability of every commander to manage stress (McLarnon et al., 2021; Miller, 2021). Stress can be managed, and stress management techniques can help reduce its negative impact on daily life (Nowak, 2021; Smith, 2019). Here are some ways that can be effective in managing stress:

- relaxation techniques - meditation, deep breathing, yoga or mindfulness can help reduce tension and improve mood.
- physical activity - regular exercise, such as jogging, swimming or dancing, can increase the production of endorphins, which helps combat stress.
- time organization - planning tasks and setting priorities can help reduce feelings of overwhelm.
- social support - talking to friends, family or a therapist can provide relief and help put the situation into perspective.

- thought management - working on negative thoughts and beliefs can help you better cope with stress. Techniques such as cognitive behavioral therapy can help.
- hobbies and interests - spending time on favorite activities can be a great way to relax and get away from daily worries.
- healthy diet: proper nutrition affects mood and energy levels, which can help manage stress.

Stress management is a process that can take time and practice, but implementing the above strategies can bring significant improvements in daily functioning (Jedrzejski, 1997; Bailey, 2002; Dziwinski, 2022). Stress and depression, on the other hand, are closely related and can influence each other's severity. A proper understanding of this relationship is crucial for effective treatment and support for people struggling with these problems (Seligman, 1996; Rekha Sahoo, 2016).

Stress management and resilience, on the other hand, are two related concepts that relate to an individual's ability to cope with difficult situations (Schiraldi, 2019).

The difference between stress management and resilience is that the former term refers to techniques and strategies that help people cope with tension, anxiety and other negative emotions that can arise from a variety of life situations.

Key elements of stress management include:

- identifying sources of stress - understanding what triggers stress is the first step to effectively managing it,
- relaxation techniques - practices such as meditation, deep breathing, yoga or other forms of physical activity can help reduce stress,
- mindset change - developing cognitive skills, such as positive thinking or forgiveness techniques, can help you better manage stress,
- social support - building strong relationships with family and friends can provide emotional support during difficult times,
- organization of time - planning and prioritizing can help avoid excess responsibilities and associated stress.

Resilience, on the other hand, is characterized by an individual's ability to adapt to difficulties, overcome adversity and recover from crises. Resilient individuals are able to:

- adapt to change - change is inherent in life, and resilient individuals are able to adapt their approach and actions to new circumstances,
- learn from mistakes - instead of giving up, resilient individuals analyze their experiences and learn from them,
- maintain a positive outlook - optimism and hope for the future are key characteristics of resilience,
- make use of support networks - resilient individuals often benefit from the help of others, which allows them to better cope with difficulties.

The difference between stress, emotions and feelings is as follows: stress is a reaction to stimuli, emotions are intense reactions to specific situations, and feelings are long-lasting states that result from reflection on emotions. All these elements are interrelated and affect our daily lives (Lewandowska-Akhvlediani, 2020). One of the elements of personal fitness is the ability to deal with emotions (Strycharczyk, 2022). The need to educate emotions has been postulated by many authors, but especially these problems were dealt with by D. Goleman and J. Koziński. On the other hand, modern psychologists pay attention to the broad aspectuality of emotions, which, as a complex set of bodily and mental changes (Orhon, 2020), include physiological arousal, feelings, cognitive processes and behavioral reactions, performed in response to a situation, perceived as important for a person (Borowska, 2004; Figley et al., 2014).

One of the main causes of all kinds of negative emotions is our way of thinking, or rather our lack of control over our thoughts (Meredith et al., 2011). They are the main cause of our, sometimes spontaneous, uncontrollable reactions - and when we calm down and do a thorough analysis, we usually find that it is just “stuck in our head” - in the form of “bad habits of thought”. S. Briers points out the fundamental errors in our thinking that are usually the beginning of our unfavorable emotions (Briers, 2011) are:

- catastrophizing - emotions of this kind most often occur when we start to rush and suddenly something doesn't work out for us. Then we begin to think in an unpredictable, nervous way - stress begins to mount and yet on top of that we just happen to have to go to the toilet, and it's just nowhere to be found, etc. Most often the word disaster comes to mind;
- generalizing (generalizing) is to focus on what is a common property of all elements. Words like “it's always the same ...” or “again, as usual ...” or “something always has to go wrong ...” - are indicative of generalizing;
- mind-reading - we often attribute to someone some behavior that is not true. The same happens with thoughts. This is due to the fact that we often analyze certain behaviors or spoken words of people towards each other in the past. In a way, this is the right way of thinking, but people change and their reasoning, sometimes also their character (disposition) changes! So - you can't know what another person thinks unless he tells you;
- polarized and inflexible thinking - thinking based on drawing conclusions that often do not correspond to reality, e.g., like “not black - it's probably white”, or “you won or lost”; “if you're not skinny, you're probably fat”;
- emotional reasoning - often telling myself things I haven't done yet, but “I certainly would”. Emotional reasoning is when emotions are treated as “evidence” of the truth of negative feelings;

- blaming - some sentences indicate placing responsibility for “something” on others, e.g. “It's all your fault ...”. Such behavior is sometimes a defensive tactic to get rid of responsibility for one's failures;
- filtering and exaggeration is a distortion of one's thought process, leaving out those that fit one's own preconceptions of bias, and leaving out others. Exaggeration is the attribution of excessive importance or frequency to events that fit one's own views and beliefs;
- emotive language - some words or sentences are emotionally tinged. Sometimes people say sentences in an emotive way - they convince themselves that they will not be able to do something, cope with something, etc. Emotional coloring of statements - can also be telling prejudices.

Developing emotional intelligence and Emotion Management are becoming increasingly popular and widespread. Negative emotions affect health, moreover, they can cause psychosomatic disorders. It is worth noting that positive or negative emotions usually occur in response to certain types of events. Moreover, properly interpreted, the negativity of emotions is that their appearance heralds a threat to the realization of human interests and goals.

3. Studies and research methodology

The authors focused on the analysis of the available literature on building mental resilience - resilience - in socio-professional situations of commanders. The authors based their considerations on Polish and foreign literature, studying scientific articles.

The main purpose of the article is to present issues related to the effective building of psychological resilience (resilience), in the socio-professional situations of commanders, to prevent professional burnout or other risks posed by military service.

The realization of the goal focused on the research procedure involving planes:

- theoretical-cognitive, which presented a theoretical treatment of issues related to residualism, depression, stress,
- empirical, focused on conducting empirical research, including the relationship between depression and stress levels,
- utilitarian, which aimed to demonstrate the need to consciously build mental resilience (resilience) among commanders (managers).

The content and conclusions presented in the article are based on an in-depth analysis of the literature on the subject, as well as on a survey study, in which 141 military students were randomly selected out of 707, a representative sample of the study. The respondents were subjected to two tests.

The first was to determine their level of depression, and the second was to determine their level of stress. The test results were then correlated, and the results are presented in the next section of the article.

4. Studies Results and Discussion

Of the 141 respondents, more than 90% of the students realize that the ability to control their own emotions in any life situation is very important. Only nearly 8% do not give this personal competence much importance, and 2%, it is to be believed, do not have sufficient knowledge on this subject (Fig. 1).

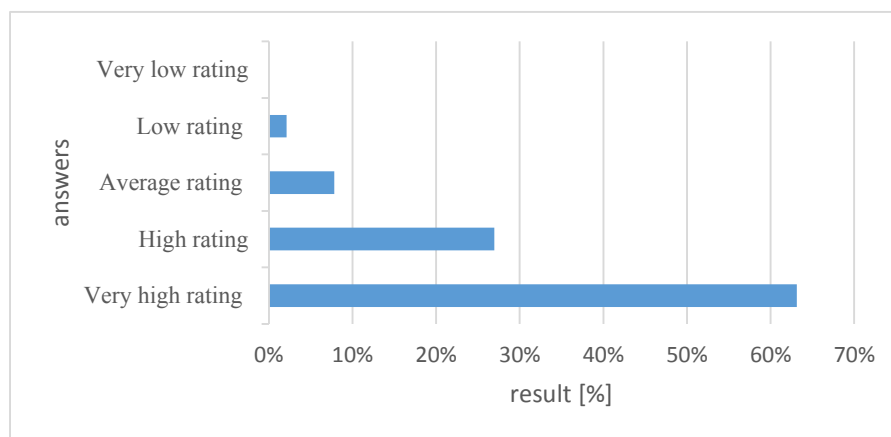


Figure 1. The level of knowledge among students about controlling their emotions.

Source: own study on the basis of the collected empirical material.

When it comes to determining one's own level of depression (Fig. 2), using the test, the results can be a definite concern. This is due to the fact that out of 141 people surveyed, 81% show the absence of depression or its mild level (60% and 21%, respectively). On the other hand, a dose of concern is that nearly 20% of those surveyed show moderate and deep depression (13% and 6%, respectively). Given that these are first-year students, one can anticipate that their personalities will change over the course of the 5 years of study and they will begin to approach life differently, and as a result, will no longer show such significant distressing depressive states. There is, of course, a big role here for the commanders-turned-subunit commanders, who should devote a lot of attention and work to this issue in the fields of both psychology, pedagogy and the personal development of subordinates, especially the formation of their emotional intelligence, their acquisition of soft skills or teaching them relaxation methods and techniques and applying them to stressful situations and depressive states, etc.

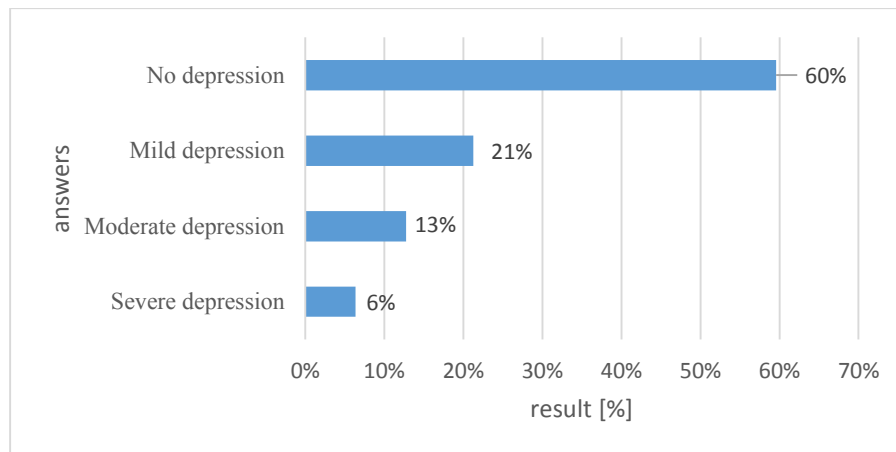


Figure 2. Depression levels among students.

Source: own study on the basis of the collected empirical material.

The study showed (Fig. 3) that there is an unquestionable relationship between the level of depression and the level of stress. Similarly, as in determining the level of depression of the students surveyed, about 92% of the subjects show low and medium levels of stress (74% and 18%, respectively). In contrast, 8% of respondents show very high and high levels of stress (6% and 1%, respectively).

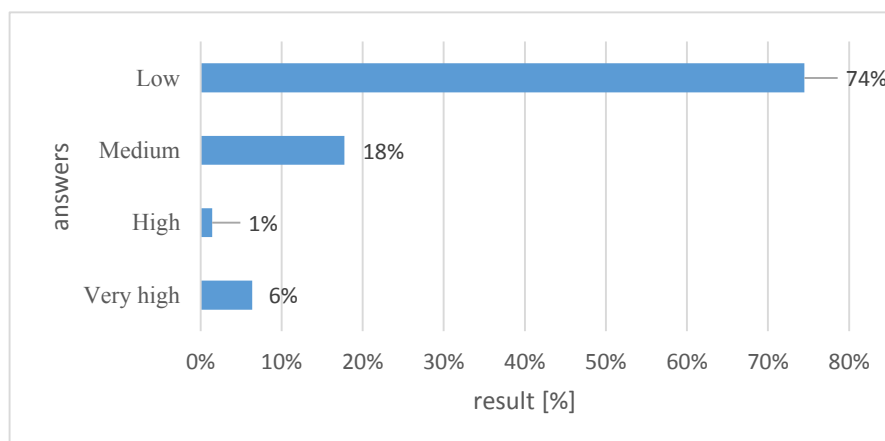


Figure 3. Stress levels among students.

Source: own study on the basis of the collected empirical material.

Those with deep depression (56% of respondents) also showed very high stress, 33% medium stress, and 11% low stress. It seems that in this case, as was to be expected - the vast majority of deeply depressed respondents also had high levels of stress (Fig. 4).

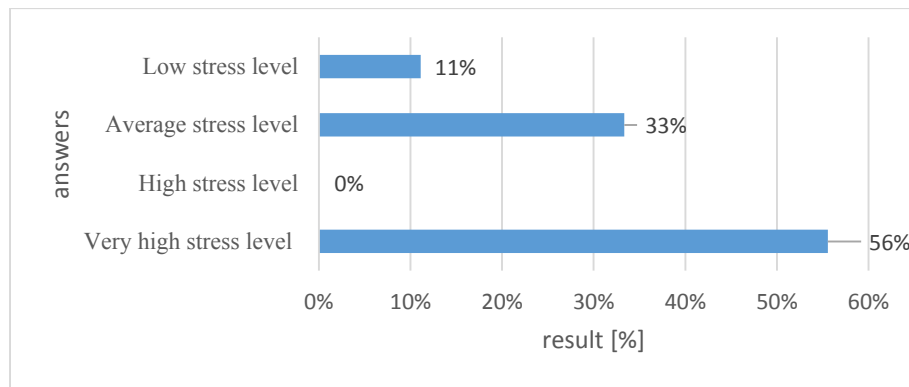


Figure 4. Correlations of severely depressed students with their stress levels.

Source: own study on the basis of the collected empirical material.

Those with moderate depression (11% of respondents) showed very high levels of stress, 6% showed high levels of stress, 17% showed moderate levels of stress, and 6% showed low levels of stress (Fig. 5)

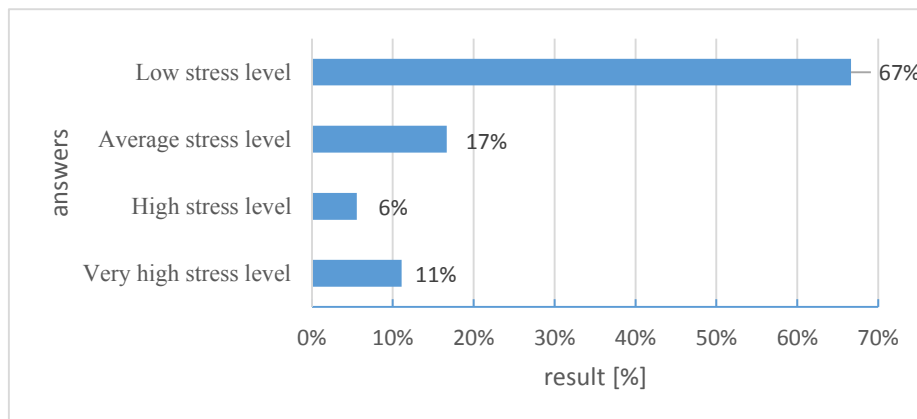


Figure 5. Correlations of moderately depressed students with their stress levels.

Source: own study on the basis of the collected empirical material.

Respondents who showed mild levels of depression (11% of respondents) showed high levels of stress, 30% showed medium levels of stress, and 63% showed low levels of stress (Fig. 6).

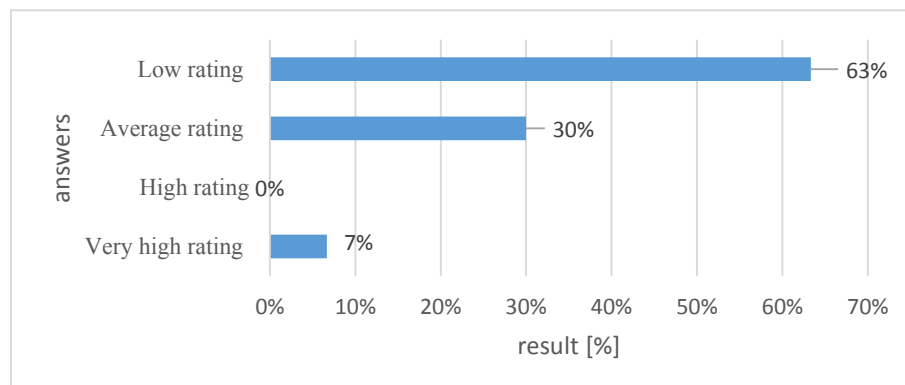


Figure 6. Correlations of mildly depressed students with their stress levels.

Source: own study on the basis of the collected empirical material.

In the present comparison, it was also possible to predict the final result. Namely, non-depressed subjects) in 97% show low stress levels, and only- 3% of the state of the subjects showed, despite the absence of a depressive state- high stress levels (Fig. 7).

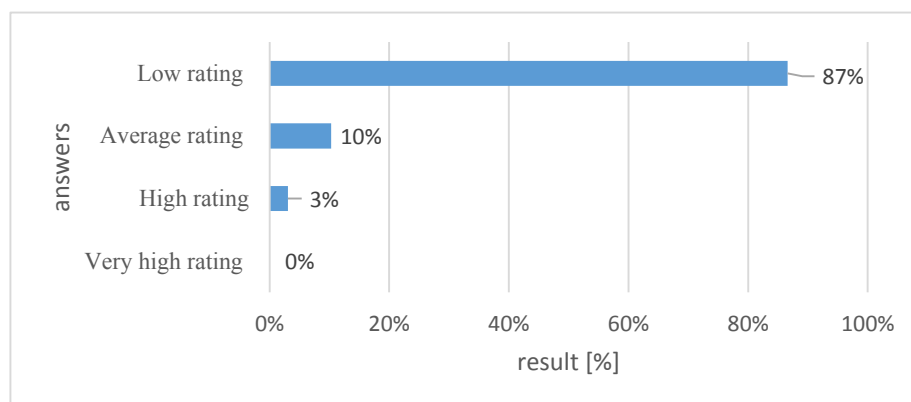


Figure 7. Correlations of non-depressed students with their stress levels.

Source: own study on the basis of the collected empirical material.

There is a close relationship between the level of depression and the level of stress. Higher levels of depression entail higher levels of stress and vice versa. Everyone should determine his or her level of depression and level of stress in order to know what forms, methods or techniques of therapy to use in order to be able to restore the desired state of his or her daily socio-occupational functionality.

Discussion

In view of the research, the following is a selection of therapies, methods, techniques, influencing problems related to the alleviation of stressful and depressive states and restoring a person's daily functionality.

A therapy with an impact on problems related to the alleviation of stressful and depressive states is the so-called Cognitive-Behavioral Therapy (CBT), which is a scientifically validated method of psychotherapy that focuses on the relationship between thoughts, emotions, behavior and physiology. Its goal is to change maladaptive thought patterns and behaviors that maintain mental problems. Here are key principles, techniques and examples from Polish practice. TPB is widely used to treat a variety of psychological problems, including depression, anxiety, phobias, obsessive-compulsive disorder, and to work on interpersonal relationship difficulties. It is an evidence-based method, meaning that its effectiveness has been confirmed in numerous scientific studies (Briers, 2011; Beck, 2011).

On the other hand, M.E.P. Seligman believes that the best way to oppose negative, very often - intrusive thoughts, laden with aspects of negativity, and even those that are the beginning of many stressful or frustrating states - is to “change their course” and change their

mentality (disposition) through positive thinking. It is difficult for people who “move in the world of negative thoughts” on a daily basis, and especially for those who live in constant stress, sometimes without realizing it at all - that it is possible to have a different picture of the surrounding reality, that is, to perceive everything around quite differently, that is, positively. Sometimes it may be necessary to visit a therapist, if a person's mental state is significantly strained by an onslaught of only negative thoughts. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that the best remedy for this whole situation is to change one's attitude to life, to see many problems and everyday situations in a completely different way - positive, cheerful, happy, enthusiastic, etc. M.E.P. Seligman believes that “An optimist faces as many failures and tragedies in life as a pessimist, but an optimist endures it better. In addition, the optimist recovers quickly after a setback, and even though he lives a little worse, he picks himself up and begins to act again. In contrast, the pessimist gives up and falls into depression. Thanks to his resilience in the face of adversity, the optimist is more successful than the pessimist at work, at school and on the playing field” (Seligman, 1996).

Another example is the relaxation technique developed by German physician J.H. Schultz in the 1930s. It is a form of self-soothing that aims to achieve a state of deep relaxation and stress reduction. Autogenic training is based on the principles of autosuggestion and aims to put a person into a state of relaxation by focusing on bodily sensations and suggestions for relaxation (Schultz, 1932). Autogenic training consists of a series of exercises that help achieve a state of relaxation. The participant focuses on his or her physical sensations, such as heaviness and warmth, which leads to a reduction in muscle tension and an improvement in mental well-being. Schultz autogenic training is an effective relaxation method that can benefit many areas of life. By focusing on bodily sensations and using autosuggestion, practitioners of this technique can improve their mental and physical well-being.

In addition, Jacobson's Progressive Training is worth mentioning. This method is often used in stress and anxiety therapy, as well as in preparation for stressful situations such as public speaking or exams (Jacobson, 1938). The training consists of tensing and relaxing individual muscles, with an inhalation you tense the muscles in question for 5 seconds, and with an exhalation you relax the tense muscles and stay like this for 10 seconds. It is important that you really pay attention to the tension and relaxation. When you tense your muscles focus on that, feel that tension. When you relax the muscles focus on that relaxation, feel it. Also pay attention to the difference between tensed and relaxed muscles. Finally, you can take a few calm, conscious breaths and move around for a while.

Conclusions

The survey conducted showed that:

- the vast majority of respondents (90%) realize that the ability to control one's emotions in any life situation is very important. In addition, 81% of respondents report no or mild levels of depression;
- research has shown that there is an unquestionable link between the level of depression and the level of stress. Similarly, as in determining the level of depression of the students surveyed, about 92% of the respondents show low and medium levels of stress;
- higher levels of depression entail higher levels of stress and vice versa. Everyone should determine their level of depression and level of stress in order to know what forms, methods or techniques of therapy to use in order to be able to restore the desired state of their daily socio-occupational functionality.

Despite the above challenges, related to the need to master the “art” of building mental resilience (resilience) in various situations - not all people experience chronic stress or depression. Much depends on individual mental resources, coping strategies, social support and emotion management skills. People who are able to build healthy relationships, enjoy the support of loved ones, and take care of their mental health can better cope with the challenges of living in society. It is also worth emphasizing the importance of mental health prevention and the availability of psychological help. Undoubtedly, it is important to realize that disregarding resilience and improving one's mental resilience can lead to rather unpleasant consequences over time. One of them is the so-called professional burnout.

Resilience not only promotes better decision-making by the commander, but also influences the morale of subordinates, creating an atmosphere of trust and support. In the face of today's challenges posed by a dynamic world, investing in the development of resilience among leaders becomes an essential part of building effective and resilient teams. Therefore, it is worthwhile for organizations to pay attention to training programs and psychological support that can support commanders in developing this important trait. After all, the commander's emotional stability is the foundation on which the success of the entire team (subdivision, squad, etc.) rests.

How important, in the context of the research conducted for the purpose of this article, becomes the importance of resilience in the formation of soldiers' mental resilience. And this applies not only to subordinates, but also to their superiors - commanders.

The authors of the paper plan to expand the research on countering one's own emotions, thus the ability to restore one's emotional equilibrium after moments of nervousness, or, for example, depression, but also excessive euphoria. In addition, the authors plan to explore how willingness to take risks, Openness to change, and flexibility in behavior and thinking affect coping with challenges in young people. It is worth noting that this type of research is particularly important for stressful occupations, as well as those with a high mental and emotional burden.

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