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## Veterans' psychological support during reintegration into civilian life

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**Abstract.** The reintegration of veterans goes far beyond employment and financial stability: it includes restoring identity, developing psychological resilience and rebuilding social ties. Veterans face typical challenges, such as post-traumatic stress disorder, loss of life orientation, and difficulties in transferring military competencies to civilian professions. The purpose of the study was to identify effective models that combine trauma-informed psychological support and career counselling to ensure sustainable reintegration. The article addresses the issue of professional counselling for veterans in the process of their reintegration into civilian life, taking into account psychological and social aspects. An analysis of foreign and Ukrainian experience has shown the effectiveness of integrated programmes that combine psychological support, career counselling and mutual assistance mechanisms. In particular, the results of the Ukrainian pilot project demonstrated significant positive changes: an increase in employment, career adaptability and self-efficacy, as well as a reduction in symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder. The findings highlighted the importance of holistic models that integrate professional and psychological dimensions to ensure not only the personal recovery of veterans, but also collective social reintegration in Ukrainian society. The practical value of the study lies in the formulation of specific recommendations for professionals: mandatory assessment of psychological readiness before starting career planning; use of narrative counselling methods; transformation of military competencies into skills understandable to employers; implementation of group and mentoring programmes involving veteran leaders; interdisciplinary cooperation between psychologists, counsellors, social workers and employers

**Keywords:** post-traumatic growth; career adaptability; psychological resilience; narrative counseling; life story work; post-service adaptation

### Introduction

The reintegration of military veterans into civilian life presents a multifaceted set of challenges, encompassing psychological, social, and vocational dimensions. In addition to logistical concerns such as employment and housing, veterans frequently encounter significant disruptions to their sense of identity, self-worth, and life purpose. It is an established fact that military service, particularly in combat or high-stress roles, tends to engender a distinct set of values, behaviours and coping mechanisms. These characteristics are not necessarily compatible with civilian contexts. Consequently, reintegration is not merely a return to previous civilian roles, but rather a profound psychological transition necessitating intentional support and adaptation strategies. A critical yet frequently overlooked facet of this

transition pertains to vocational guidance. Whilst numerous programmes concentrate narrowly on reskilling or job placement, effective vocational reintegration demands a broader, more holistic approach. In this context, employment functions not only as an economic necessity but also as a medium for the reconstruction of identity, the re-establishment of agency, and the re-positioning of the individual within society. In the absence of meaningful engagement in civilian employment, veterans are susceptible to marginalisation, psychological distress, and protracted dependency on social support systems.

Researchers introduced the "Purposeful Pathways" intervention, an integrative career development programme designed for veterans with mental health and substance use concerns (Stevenson *et al.*, 2020). The

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intervention combines vocational guidance with mental wellness support, addressing barriers such as low self-efficacy and stigma. Preliminary results indicate that veterans participating in the programme reported increased engagement in employment activities and improved mental health outcomes. The study by N. Rattray *et al.* (2025), examined the reintegration of veterans into society after discharge from military service. The research highlighted the significance of support systems, utilisation of United States Department of Veterans Affairs (VA) services, and experiences with mental health in influencing the transition to civilian life. The study emphasises the necessity for comprehensive support structures to facilitate successful reintegration. M.E. Sprong *et al.* (2024) investigated the relationship between the treatment of mental disorders and the vocational rehabilitation of veterans. The findings suggest that concurrent enrolment in mental health and substance use disorder treatment alongside vocational programmes enhances overall outcomes, including employment stability and psychological well-being. A model for vocational rehabilitation that integrates psychological support was developed, emphasising the importance of addressing mental health issues concurrently with career development (Stevenson *et al.*, 2023). The model advocates for personalised interventions that consider the unique experiences and challenges faced by veterans. The T. Carlton (2025) evidence integration review of multimodal interventions for veterans, which included more than 7,500 participants, found that interventions that combine psychological support, social engagement, and physical activity led to significant improvements in outcomes for post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), depression, and reintegration. Research on the mental health challenges and barriers to adjustment faced by veterans revealed that factors such as enduring military-influenced mindsets, strained family relationships, and limited access to mental health services and resources have a significant impact on the well-being of service personnel and their families (De Klerk *et al.*, 2024).

Reviews of the impact of employment and vocational training interventions on veterans' health and well-being have highlighted that while employment programmes can have a positive impact on veterans' health and well-being, the existing evidence base remains limited, requiring further research to understand the underlying mechanisms. J.N. Heuer *et al.* (2025) explored the evolving research on veterans' reintegration into society and noted that there is a need for a broader approach that takes into account the diverse needs of veterans and their communities. The author advocates for interdisciplinary collaboration and community-based initiatives to enhance reintegration outcomes. A study of the psychological health and physical well-being of military veterans by K.J. Waldhauser *et al.* (2025) found that veterans are at increased risk of developing mental

health disorders, including PTSD and depression, after leaving the military. The study emphasised the importance of integrated care approaches to address these challenges. While the reviewed studies provide valuable insights into various aspects of veteran reintegration, several gaps remain. It is noteworthy that there is a paucity of research focusing on the integration of vocational guidance with psychological support tailored to the Ukrainian context. Furthermore, the efficacy of peer support models in enhancing reintegration outcomes merits further exploration. Moreover, the role of digital platforms in providing accessible vocational and psychological support to veterans is an area that has not been extensively studied. The purpose of the study was to summarise and critically reflect on scientific approaches to the development of an integrated model of psychological support and career guidance, developed on the basis of existing theoretical and applied research. This model was considered as a conceptual framework for improving employment outcomes, strengthening psychological well-being and enhancing the success of reintegration of Ukrainian veterans into civilian life. The methodology of this article was confined to the systematic examination and critical synthesis of existing scholarly and programme evidence concerning veterans' vocational and psychological reintegration. The methodology of the article was grounded in a structured review and critical synthesis of recent scholarly literature, empirical findings and programme reports addressing the psychological and vocational reintegration of veterans. Sources were identified on the basis of their scientific validity, relevance to the Ukrainian context, and publication within the last six years. Particular attention was paid to studies reporting qualitative interview data, quantitative survey outcomes, and evaluations of integrated interventions, including a Ukrainian pilot programme that employed the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale, the General Self-Efficacy Scale and a PTSD symptom checklist. A thematic and comparative analysis was applied to identify convergent patterns, assess strengths and limitations of existing approaches, and evaluate their transferability. This strategy provided the foundation for developing a conceptual model and formulating evidence-based recommendations for optimising veterans' reintegration into civilian life.

### **Theoretical background the potential of trauma-informed, humanistic, and constructivist approaches in facilitating the vocational reintegration of military veterans**

To understand this process among former members of the armed forces, it is necessary to apply a theoretical framework that adopts a multidimensional perspective, encompassing psychological recovery, identity reconstruction, and career development. The reintegration of military veterans into civilian life presents a complex

interplay of psychological, social, and vocational challenges. Veterans frequently experience disruptions in identity, self-esteem, and life purpose due to the values, behaviours, and coping mechanisms acquired during military service, which may not align with civilian expectations. Employment serves not only as a source of income but also as a critical means for restoring personal agency, social belonging, and overall well-being. Without structured support, veterans are at increased risk of marginalisation, prolonged reliance on welfare, and exacerbated mental health conditions. Thus, effective reintegration necessitates holistic approaches that integrate vocational guidance, psychological support, and community engagement. Recent empirical studies provide insight into the benefits of such integrated approaches. On the opinion of B.J. Stevenson *et al.* (2020), the "Purposeful Pathways" programme demonstrated that combining vocational guidance with mental health support substantially improves veterans' employment engagement and psychological well-being. This combination allowed participants to apply coping strategies directly within workplace contexts, reinforcing both skill acquisition and emotional regulation.

K.J. Waldhauser *et al.* (2025) highlighted that successful reintegration is closely linked to access to social support networks and veteran-specific services. Access to these networks not only provided practical assistance but also fostered a sense of belonging and identity continuity. M.E. Sprong *et al.* (2023) emphasised that concurrent participation in mental health treatment and vocational rehabilitation leads to enhanced employment stability and psychological outcomes. The dual engagement ensured that therapeutic gains translated effectively into everyday work performance. B.J. Stevenson *et al.* (2023) developed a model for vocational rehabilitation that integrates psychological support, underlining the importance of personalised interventions tailored to veterans' unique experiences. Such tailored interventions enabled more precise targeting of barriers to reintegration, increasing programme efficacy. The IOM Ukraine – data and analytics (2025) thematic brief underscored specific reintegration challenges faced by Ukrainian veterans, particularly the need for structured support programmes that address both vocational and psychosocial needs. These challenges highlighted the importance of coordinated, multi-faceted approaches to ensure comprehensive support during the transition to civilian life. Complementing these findings, numerous studies have examined different dimensions of veteran reintegration, which can be broadly grouped into three thematic areas: employment and vocational rehabilitation, psychosocial support and identity reconstruction, and health-related challenges. Employment after service has been shown to influence not only economic stability but also health outcomes. According to K.M. Abraham *et al.* (2021), vocational rehabilitation among veterans with mental health

conditions significantly reduced subsequent health-care utilisation, which illustrates its dual value as both a social and a health intervention. This effect reflected the way structured vocational support reinforced both social integration and health management. Similarly, A. Ahlbäck *et al.* (2022) emphasised the structural impact of labour demand and gender equality policies on women's integration into the armed forces, demonstrating that macro-level conditions directly shape opportunities for service members. These insights align with the Ukrainian situation, where systemic labour market instability may complicate the transfer of military skills into civilian careers. In this context, targeted policy interventions could help mitigate structural barriers and facilitate smoother transitions for service members. This underlines the need for programmes that integrate both practical skill development and personalised support to ensure effective reintegration.

Reintegration is not merely an economic transition but a profound identity shift. A. Barnett *et al.* (2022) showed that engagement in social groups strengthened identity continuity and supported a smoother adjustment to civilian life. Such participation helped veterans maintain a sense of purpose and belonging outside the military. It also facilitated the development of coping strategies that were essential for managing the uncertainties of civilian life. Likewise, A. Demers (2011) demonstrated that community participation helped mitigate isolation and created a sense of belonging. It encouraged the development of supportive peer networks that eased the transition from military to civilian life. Additionally, active engagement in community activities reinforced daily routines and provided meaningful roles. The role of peer involvement is further supported by S.V. Eisen *et al.* (2015), who found that veterans employed as peer support workers experienced not only occupational benefits but also improved mental health. This suggests that structured peer roles can simultaneously enhance professional development and psychological well-being. These findings correlate with the Ukrainian pilot programme analysed in this study, where group-based mentoring activities proved particularly effective in enhancing self-efficacy and reducing post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) symptoms. In contrast, research by C.A. Castro & S. Kintzle (2014) on the "Hemingway effect" underscores the risks of insufficient psychosocial integration, pointing to the potential consequences of neglecting identity work during transition. These studies highlight the critical interplay between structured support, peer engagement, and identity reconstruction in facilitating successful reintegration.

Reintegration is further complicated by the interaction of psychological and physical health conditions. M. Kukla *et al.* (2015) linked PTSD and depression to cardiovascular disease, highlighting the importance of addressing mind-body dynamics in rehabilitation. Their findings suggest that interventions addressing

both mental and physical health may prevent cascading health complications. This connection underscores the need for integrated healthcare approaches that consider both mental and physical health simultaneously. Similarly, T. Lund *et al.* (2024) demonstrated the dyadic impact of PTSD and chronic pain on veterans and their families, illustrating how individual conditions can affect broader social units. This highlights the importance of family-informed support strategies in reintegration programmes. J.C. MacDermid *et al.* (2025) associated military sexual trauma with long-term chronic pain, emphasising the enduring effects of trauma on physical well-being. Their study indicates that early identification and targeted care are crucial to mitigating long-term disability. N. Mota *et al.* (2023) expanded this perspective by documenting the prevalence and correlates of military sexual trauma among Canadian veterans, stressing the gender-specific dimension of post-service health. Their findings underline that gender-sensitive approaches are necessary to provide equitable care. This indicates that tailored interventions must account for both gender and trauma type to effectively address long-term health outcomes. These findings are highly relevant for Ukraine, where many veterans face overlapping conditions but encounter fragmented healthcare systems. While international models call for integrated treatment, Ukrainian practice remains insufficiently coordinated, which underscores the need for systemic reforms.

This indicates that tailored interventions must account for both gender and trauma type to effectively address long-term health outcomes, ensuring that support measures are comprehensive and responsive to individual needs. These findings are highly relevant for Ukraine, where many veterans face overlapping conditions but encounter fragmented healthcare systems. While international models call for integrated treatment, Ukrainian practice remains insufficiently coordinated, which underscores the urgent need for systemic reforms to support holistic veteran care. Other studies provide methodological and contextual insights. For example, C.A. Elnitsky *et al.* (2017) proposed an ecological model of reintegration, emphasising the interplay between individual, relational, and institutional levels. This model also suggests that effective reintegration strategies must consider the interactions between personal, social, and systemic factors. This framework highlights how reintegration outcomes are shaped by multiple, interacting layers of influence rather than isolated factors. G.K. Gill *et al.* (2022) highlighted the complex interactions between trauma exposure, psychosocial factors, and health conditions, suggesting that interventions must simultaneously address both clinical symptoms and functional reintegration. Their findings indicate that overlooking any of these dimensions may limit the effectiveness of reintegration programmes. Scholars have also underlined the importance of

inclusivity: J.D. Guest *et al.* (2024) reflected on culturally competent counselling for LGBTQ+ veterans, while M. Aydoğan (2022) proposed culturally sensitive counselling techniques in educational settings, which could be adapted to veteran support. From a methodological perspective, R. Kleinert-Ventresca *et al.* (2023) stressed the value of qualitative approaches, such as thematic analysis, in capturing nuanced reintegration experiences. Such methods provide depth and context that quantitative metrics alone may overlook, revealing the subtleties of individual and group adjustment processes. These studies demonstrate that veteran reintegration is a multidimensional process shaped by vocational, psychosocial, and health factors. International evidence validates the effectiveness of integrative models, yet gaps remain in the Ukrainian context. In particular, the integration of psychological counselling with career guidance has been insufficiently explored, and innovative formats such as digital self-directed programmes (Alichniewicz *et al.*, 2025) require local testing. At the same time, promising Ukrainian initiatives, including narrative-based counselling (Kharchenko, 2021), indicate that adapted models can effectively address fragmented identities and improve employment readiness. Therefore, the reviewed literature both supports and complements the conceptual framework of this study, highlighting the importance of holistic, context-sensitive interventions.

The theory of post-traumatic growth (PTG) posits that adversity can foster positive psychological changes, including the development of new strengths, goals, and life perspectives. Structured psychological interventions enable veterans to reinterpret trauma as a catalyst for resilience and meaning-making, highlighting how guided reflection can transform traumatic experiences into personal growth. These interventions also facilitated the application of coping strategies in daily life, reinforcing both psychological and functional adaptation. N. Kharitonova *et al.* (2024) reported that veterans who participated in PTG-oriented counselling described a renewed sense of purpose and agency, illustrating the role of narrative approaches in fostering self-efficacy. This demonstrates that narrative engagement can strengthen personal motivation and goal-directed behaviour. In Ukraine, PTG principles adapted to vocational counselling, demonstrating that reframing traumatic experiences as sources of competence significantly improved employment readiness, which emphasises the adaptability of PTG frameworks across cultural and occupational contexts. This adaptation highlights the potential for PTG-informed methods to be integrated into local vocational support structures. However, F.E. García (2023) provided a critical perspective, showing that PTG does not invariably lead to functional adaptation, particularly when persistent distress remains unresolved. This caution indicates that growth-focused interventions must be paired with



ongoing clinical monitoring to ensure long-term effectiveness. This critique is highly pertinent to the Ukrainian context, where enduring post-traumatic symptoms often complicate reintegration, underscoring the need for approaches that balance the recognition of growth with sustained clinical care.

Evidence from Canadian programmes (Chen *et al.*, 2023) further supports the integrative use of PTG, as structured counselling not only reduced PTSD symptoms but also facilitated smoother civilian transitions. Thus, PTG contributes valuable insights into the potential for positive change, yet it must be applied cautiously and in combination with trauma-informed therapeutic support to ensure realistic and sustainable outcomes for veterans. While PTG underscores the transformative potential of trauma, Career Construction Theory (CCT) provides a complementary framework by conceptualising career development as a process of identity construction. According to A. Smith *et al.* (2025), career paths evolve through personal narratives shaped by both individual and societal factors. In practice, this means that veterans can reinterpret military service as one chapter of a broader life story, enabling them to integrate military identity into civilian trajectories. M. Patel *et al.* (2024) reported that CCT-based interviews in the UK enhanced clarity in veterans' career goals, demonstrating the effectiveness of structured career conversations in supporting vocational decision-making. Similarly, L. Piankivska (2022) demonstrated similar benefits in Ukrainian pilot studies, where narrative techniques helped address fragmented identities, highlighting the importance of integrating personal storytelling into career guidance for coherent self-concept reconstruction. However, critics point out that narrative-based methods can be time-consuming and cognitively demanding. Veterans experiencing severe trauma may struggle to articulate their stories, which limits the effectiveness of purely narrative interventions (Boyd *et al.*, 2021). This observation is significant in the Ukrainian context, where many veterans confront not only fragmented identities but also ongoing psychological distress. Thus, while CCT offers a powerful structure for career meaning-making, it requires adaptation – such as combining narrative interviews with stabilisation techniques or group-based formats – to ensure accessibility and effectiveness for a wider range of veterans.

Building upon the insights of PTG and CCT, positive psychotherapy (PPT) introduces a strengths-based, value-oriented approach that directs attention to personal resources, cultural values, and interpersonal relationships. N. Peseschkian (2021) argued that PPT is particularly valuable in times of crisis, as it fosters hope and creative problem-solving. Expanding on this, S. Shevchenko & H. Varina (2025) implemented PPT in group sessions with Ukrainian veterans, reporting improvements in resilience and reductions in depressive symptoms. This corresponds with our pilot programme

results, where the emphasis on strengths reframing facilitated greater adaptability and optimism in participants. International evidence also supports its effectiveness: in Germany, C.D. Ryff (2024) demonstrated that combining PPT with vocational training enhanced long-term reintegration outcomes in rehabilitation contexts. Nevertheless, PPT has limitations. By focusing predominantly on personal resources, it risks overlooking systemic barriers such as employer bias, limited labour market opportunities, or insufficient institutional support. This critique is crucial for the Ukrainian context, where structural challenges remain pronounced. Therefore, PPT cannot function as a standalone solution; it should be integrated into broader interdisciplinary models that combine psychological resilience with career counselling, employer engagement, and social policy reforms. In this way, PPT contributes to strengthening veterans' optimism and coping resources, while its effectiveness ultimately depends on alignment with systemic and contextual factors. Taken together, these three perspectives highlight different but complementary aspects of vocational reintegration. PTG reframes trauma as a potential source of growth, CCT provides a narrative structure for vocational identity, and PPT activates personal strengths and values. However, no single approach is sufficient to address the complexity of reintegration. For this reason, an integrated model is required – one that combines trauma sensitivity, narrative meaning-making, and strengths-based interventions. This integrative perspective is particularly salient in Ukraine, where veterans' needs are shaped simultaneously by the psychological consequences of trauma and by the structural challenges of a war-torn labour market.

### **Analysis of empirical data and practical methods used in the field of professional reintegration of military veterans**

Empirical studies and applied programmes have been shown to provide critical insights into the effectiveness of theoretical models for the vocational reintegration of veterans. While theoretical frameworks such as PTG, CCT, and PPT offer valuable perspectives, their real-world application reveals both strengths and limitations. This section reviews recent empirical findings and case studies to assess the practical impact of these models. A plethora of studies have indicated that former members of the armed forces frequently encounter a multitude of obstacles when seeking gainful employment. These obstacles encompass psychological distress, identity disruption, and structural challenges. For instance, a study by N.A. Sayer *et al.* (2014) identified emotional dysregulation, difficulty translating military experience into civilian job skills, lack of social support, and stigma from potential employers as common obstacles. These challenges are frequently compounded by unresolved trauma, anxiety, or depression, which have been shown to negatively affect motivation,

focus, and self-perception in professional settings. A large-scale survey conducted by the International Organization for Migration in Ukraine revealed that over 60% of the participating veterans reported feelings of unpreparedness to re-enter the civilian labour market (IOM Ukraine..., 2025). The survey identified psychological stress, unfamiliarity with civilian job search procedures, and insufficient vocational training as the primary obstacles encountered by these veterans. It is important to note that participants who received a combination of psychological and career support were significantly more likely to obtain stable employment within six months of participating in the program.

In order to address these issues, a pilot initiative was launched in 2024-2025 by the Psychological Counselling and Training Centre of the Ivan Zyazyun Institute of Pedagogical and Adult Education of the National Academy of Educational Sciences of Ukraine. The programme was administered to a sample group of 50

veterans and comprised a structured sequence of services, including psychological counselling based on the principles of positive psychotherapy and trauma recovery, career counselling, interviews and goal-setting workshops, vocational training, and employer networking activities (Pavlyk, 2025). To evaluate the effectiveness of this comprehensive support model, participants completed a set of standardised psychometric instruments both before and after the intervention. The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) assessed individual resources for coping with current and anticipated career tasks, while the General Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) evaluated participants' beliefs in their ability to manage difficult tasks and cope with adversity. Additionally, a standardised PTSD symptom checklist was employed to monitor psychological distress, and employment status was tracked to evaluate objective behavioural change. The programme produced significant positive changes across all measured indicators (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Pre- and Post-Intervention indicators among Ukrainian veterans

Indicator	Pre-intervention	Post-intervention	% Change
Employment rate	42%	72%	+30
Career adaptability (mean)	2.8	4.1	+46
Self-efficacy (mean)	3.2	4.5	+41
PTSD symptoms (mean)	3.7	2.1	-43

**Source:** compiled by the author based on N. Pavlyk (2025)

The employment rate increased from 42% to 72%, indicating that approximately three-quarters of the participants were able to secure employment following the intervention. The Career Adaptability Assessment Scale (CAAS) showed an improvement of 46%, which indicates that psychological resources for navigating the labour market have been strengthened. An increase in self-efficacy scores by 41% was observed, indicating an enhancement in confidence regarding the ability to achieve success in a civilian career context. It is noteworthy that symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder decreased by 43%, thereby underscoring the psychological value of combining trauma-informed care with career development interventions. This decline in PTSD symptomatology suggests not only an enhancement in mental health but also an increased propensity for sustained engagement in the labour force. Similar findings have been reported in the United States, the United Kingdom, and Canada. For instance, E.V. Clemens *et al.* (2009) demonstrated the effectiveness of career construction. In addition, researchers C. Stone & D.L. Stone (2015) emphasised the significance of employer education and structural supports, noting that veterans frequently thrive in civilian roles when workplace cultures are inclusive and accommodating. The weight of this body of evidence supports the claim that vocational guidance for veterans is most effective when it is integrated with psychological care, tailored to individual experiences, and situated within a

supportive community or organisational environment. The Ukrainian pilot programme is an exemplary model of comprehensive support, illustrating the favourable impact of integrating psychological counselling, career development and vocational training. These findings emphasise the necessity of adopting an interdisciplinary approach to the vocational reintegration of veterans, which can function as a model for analogous initiatives in other countries.

### **Practical guidelines and recommendations for supporting veterans' vocational reintegration**

Translating theoretical models and empirical data into actionable practice requires a structured yet adaptable framework that addresses the complex and multidimensional nature of veterans' reintegration. Effective vocational guidance for veterans should adopt a trauma-informed, strengths-based, and narrative-centred approach. The following recommendations are intended for psychologists, career counsellors, social workers, and institutional stakeholders working with post-service populations, with a particular emphasis on strategies relevant to the Ukrainian context. Prior to initiating vocational planning, it is essential to assess a veteran's psychological readiness. This includes screening for trauma-related symptoms, such as PTSD, depression, or moral injury, alongside evaluation of motivational factors, perceived barriers, and existing support

networks. Standardised instruments such as the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale and the Post-Traumatic Growth Inventory (Tedeschi & Calhoun, 2004) can help identify resilience and growth potential. Counsellors must ensure that veterans are emotionally stable enough to engage in career planning and provide parallel therapeutic support for those experiencing significant psychological distress. Where trauma dominates daily functioning, vocational interventions should be temporarily deferred until appropriate stabilisation is achieved.

Narrative techniques, including the Career Construction Interview (Savickas, 2013), facilitate the reconstruction of veterans' life stories, integrating military experiences into coherent civilian identities. This storytelling process reinforces identity continuity and fosters a forward-looking mindset. Reflective writing, guided autobiography, and expressive arts can complement traditional interviews, offering alternative avenues for meaning-making, particularly for veterans with communication difficulties or emotional numbing. Such techniques have been successfully applied in the United States and Australia, where narrative-based programmes enhanced career clarity and post-service adaptation (Rhodes *et al.*, 2024). Veterans frequently struggle to articulate how their military experience translates to civilian employment. Counsellors should collaborate with clients to reframe competencies – for example, translating “command responsibility” into “team leadership” or “combat readiness” into “stress tolerance and rapid decision-making.” Strengths-based inventories and motivational interviewing can support this reframing. Equally important is the recognition of non-technical strengths, including reliability, commitment to service, and organisational discipline, which are highly valued in civilian workplaces.

Group-based career counselling paired with peer support has been shown to enhance engagement and retention (Sayer *et al.*, 2014). Veterans benefit from sharing experiences with peers who understand military culture and the challenges of transition. Structured peer programmes – such as mentoring schemes, career clubs, or facilitated discussion groups – can reduce isolation, normalise difficulties, and foster collaborative problem-solving. Including sessions with veterans who have successfully transitioned to civilian roles helps concretise possible career pathways and serves as motivation. No single professional can address the full spectrum of reintegration needs. Effective vocational guidance requires coordinated input from psychologists, career counsellors, social workers, health professionals, and employment specialists. Regular case conferences and shared decision-making enhance service quality and consistency. Collaboration with employers is crucial: educating hiring managers on military culture, reducing stigma, and promoting inclusive recruitment practices create systemic improvements. Public-private partnerships can expand placement

opportunities, while government support schemes, such as wage subsidies or retraining grants, mitigate economic risk for both veterans and employers.

International programmes provide instructive examples. In Canada, the Veterans Transition Network (2024) integrates psychological support, skills training, and employer engagement, yielding high employment retention. In the United Kingdom, the Career Transition Partnership (2024) combines one-to-one counselling with workshops and employer networks, emphasising strengths-based approaches. For Ukraine, these models can be adapted by combining local psychological counselling, narrative career guidance, and targeted employer engagement within community-based initiatives. This integrated approach ensures that veterans receive holistic support, aligning vocational opportunities with psychological recovery and social reintegration. In summary, vocational guidance for Ukrainian veterans should blend trauma-informed assessment, narrative techniques, strengths reframing, peer support, and interdisciplinary collaboration. By adopting both international best practices and locally tailored interventions, practitioners can enhance veterans' employment outcomes, foster psychological well-being, and facilitate sustainable reintegration into civilian life.

## Conclusions

Veterans were shown to face persistent challenges related to identity, purpose, and the translation of military skills into civilian careers. Employment was identified in the literature not only as a source of economic stability but also as a vehicle for restoring autonomy, self-efficacy, and social belonging. Studies conducted in different countries confirmed that structured and integrated support contributed to higher confidence, improved adaptability in the civilian labour market, and reduced psychological distress. This body of evidence suggested that effective reintegration should be understood as multidimensional and holistic. Comparative analyses of Ukrainian initiatives and international experience demonstrated that interventions combining psychological counselling, narrative-based career planning, strengths reframing, and community engagement yielded particularly significant results. Such approaches were associated with improvements in career adaptability, self-efficacy, and emotional well-being, together with reductions in post-traumatic stress indicators. The reviewed evidence indicated that trauma-informed practices and strengths-based frameworks created opportunities to transform previous adversity into resources that supported professional development and personal growth. Through the identification of competencies and the reinterpretation of difficult experiences, veterans were enabled to cultivate a renewed sense of purpose that informed career decisions and life planning.

The literature highlighted the role of interdisciplinary collaboration between psychologists, career counsellors, social workers, and employers in ensuring coordinated responses to veterans' psychological, social, and vocational needs. Evidence further suggested that peer support and group-based interventions enhanced engagement, motivation, and social connectedness, reinforcing the view that the community functioned as a therapeutic and vocational resource. Overall, the studies reviewed indicated that structured, integrative interventions were viable within the Ukrainian context and could be considered as models for other post-conflict societies. The evidence consistently demonstrated that reintegration could not be limited to job placement or technical training, but required attention to psychological, social, and narrative dimensions. Interventions therefore needed to be tailored to individual strengths, experiences, and objectives, while being embedded within supportive communities and workplaces. Future research should focus on the long-term sustainability of these interventions, particularly in relation to whether

gains in employment, adaptability, and mental health can be maintained over time. Special attention should also be paid to the potential of digital platforms, mobile applications, and AI-supported systems to expand access to personalised vocational and psychological support, especially in remote or underserved regions. In addition, broader systemic and organisational factors – including employer engagement, workplace inclusivity, and policy frameworks – required more detailed examination in order to understand how structural conditions shaped sustainable reintegration.

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## **Психологічна підтримка ветеранів під час реінтеграції в цивільне життя**

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**Анотація.** Реінтеграція ветеранів виходить далеко за межі працевлаштування та фінансової стабільності: вона включає відновлення ідентичності, розвиток психологічної стійкості та відновлення соціальних зв'язків. Ветерани стикаються з типовими проблемами, такими як посттравматичний стресовий розлад, втрата життєвої орієнтації та труднощі з перенесенням військових компетенцій у цивільні професії. Метою дослідження було визначити ефективні моделі, що поєднують психологічну підтримку з урахуванням травматичного досвіду та кар'єрне консультування для забезпечення стійкої реінтеграції. У статті розглядається питання професійного консультування ветеранів у процесі їх реінтеграції в цивільне життя з урахуванням психологічних і соціальних аспектів. Аналіз зарубіжного та українського досвіду показав ефективність інтегрованих програм, що поєднують психологічну підтримку, кар'єрне консультування та механізми взаємодопомоги. Зокрема, результати українського пілотного проекту продемонстрували значні позитивні зміни: збільшення зайнятості, адаптивності до кар'єри та самоефективності, а також зменшення симптомів посттравматичного стресового розладу. Результати дослідження підкреслили важливість цілісних моделей, що інтегрують професійні та психологічні аспекти для забезпечення не тільки особистого відновлення ветеранів, але й колективної соціальної реінтеграції в українське суспільство. Практична цінність дослідження полягає у формулюванні конкретних рекомендацій для фахівців: обов'язкова оцінка психологічної готовності перед початком кар'єрного планування; використання методів нарративного консультування; перетворення військових компетенцій на навички, зрозумілі роботодавцям; впровадження групових та наставницьких програм за участю лідерів-ветеранів; міждисциплінарна співпраця між психологами, консультантами, соціальними працівниками та роботодавцями

**Ключові слова:** посттравматичне зростання; адаптивність до кар'єри; психологічна стійкість; нарративне консультування; робота з життєвою історією; адаптація після служби