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The Psychological Image of Power in the Context of the Russo-Ukrainian War: Empirical Verification

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Abstract. Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine has actualized the need to understand the role of political power as a psychological phenomenon that performs not only institutional but also symbolic functions of stabilization, cohesion and mobilization in times of crisis. The psychological image of power is viewed as a multidimensional construct that is formed under the influence of trust, justice, social identity, value dispositions and moral reflection of citizens. The purpose of the study is to empirically verify the structure of the image of power in times of war, as well as to identify its latent components. The object of the study is the perceptions of Ukrainian citizens about the government in the face of an existential threat. The methodology includes factor analysis (principal component analysis with varimax rotation) and correlation analysis by Pearson's coefficient ($n = 1128$, $p < 0.01$). Five key components have been identified: institutional trust (rational and charismatic), normative justice, social identity and cohesion, moral and ethical sensitivity, and value and ideological framework. Positive correlations between identity, cohesion, moral reflection, and trust are revealed. The practical significance of the results lies in the possibility of their application to strengthen the moral legitimacy of the government and increase social unity in times of war.

Keywords: citizens' solidarity, external military-political aggression, institutional trust, justice, legitimization

Introduction

The conditions of the protracted war caused by Russia's full-scale aggression against Ukraine have actualized the need for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of power not only as an institutional subject of governance, but also as a psychological construct that performs the symbolic functions of legitimacy, protection, mobilization and solidarity. In such circumstances, the psychological image of power appears as a multidimensional structure that is formed at the intersection of rational assessment of institutions, emotional experience of interaction with the authorities, social identity, and moral and value expectations of justice.

Political psychology proves that trust in the government is based not only on the assessment of its effectiveness but also on the perceptions of fairness of procedures, empathy in interpersonal interaction and transparency of information policy [1, 2]. In times of crisis, in particular in times of war, such perceptions are radicalized, transforming public expectations of the authorities towards the growing importance of moral legitimization, solidarity identification, and empathic resonance [3, 4].

Recent research, in particular by Ukrainian psychologists [5-7], shows the growing importance of social cohesion, ethical responsibility, and value and ideological dispositions in the perception and support of political power. At the same time, there is a methodological need to develop a holistic model of the psychological image of power that would combine cognitive (trust), normative (justice), affective (emotional involvement), identification (social identity) and ideological (value framework) dimensions.

Studies show that trust in government and its legitimacy are based not only on rational assessments of efficiency, but also on emotional and value attitudes, perceptions of justice, belonging and reciprocity [8, 9]. In times of crisis, particularly in times of war, social perceptions of power are radicalized, acquiring the characteristics of both a stabilizing resource and a potential source of conflict. The problem is that in a situation of existential threat, public expectations of power are transformed faster than the institutional changes themselves, which generates psychological tension and cognitive dissonance among citizens [4].

At the same time, the scientific understanding of the structure of the psychological image of power in the Ukrainian context of war has not yet been the subject of a systematic empirical study. Despite the existing theoretical studies on legitimacy, political trust, or civic engagement, there is no verified model that would combine the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of attitudes toward government in a hybrid war. In particular, the factor structures of the image of power in different segments of the population, psychological mechanisms of perception of procedural, interpersonal and informational justice, as well as the role of social identity in legitimization processes remain unclear. The impact of socio-affective identity, cohesion, and a sense of belonging on the legitimization of power is also uncertain, as well as the structural relationship between citizens' political and moral dispositions and empathy for government decisions.

The purpose of the study is to verify the multidimensional structure of the psychological image of power in the context of the war in Ukraine and to analyze its relationship with key social variables such as institutional trust, perception of justice, social identity, responsibility, and value dispositions of citizens.

Literature Review

The psychological study of power as an interdisciplinary subject gained increased importance during the Russian-Ukrainian war because political authority evolved into a symbolic national unifying force which protects security and upholds moral values. The scientific tradition views power as a mental creation which people develop through their emotional responses and their thinking processes and their understanding of social norms [4, 8, 9].

The national tradition of political psychology [5, 6] shows that power images form through the combination of social identity with justice perception and institutional interaction experience and public evaluations of political decisions' moral worth. Within the Ukrainian context of war, the need to analyze these components as factors of psychological stability and civic mobilization is becoming more relevant.

Research conducted in the present day demonstrates that public trust toward government institutions functions as a crucial element which determines their official power. The system consists of two core elements which operate through institutional and interpersonal systems which span from national to local levels [10, 11]. In this regard researchers pay attention to the role of structural and charismatic trust [2], which is based on the personalization of power in the image of a leader. Theories of procedural justice [8, 12] emphasize that citizens support the government not only because of its effectiveness, but also because of the perception of honesty, openness, and ethical decision-making processes. The current state of Ukrainian studies supports this view because Naydionova and Naydionov [7] demonstrate that power loses its legitimacy when any type of procedural or interpersonal or informational injustice takes place.

Social identity functions as a unifying force which provides symbolic backing to the state during political activism. The social identity theory which Tajfel and Turner [13] developed shows how people use their national or civil community affiliation to maintain psychological stability during times of war. The government receives support from hybrid warfare through the combination of social identity and civic cohesion and emotional solidarity between people according to Bar-Tal [14] and Huddy et al. [15]. Zhang et al. [16] explain that people who identify with their political community and feel connected to it become less sensitive to information manipulation which helps them stay strong during emergency situations. Bar-Tal and Halperin [3] demonstrate that people develop social resilience through collective identity formation which strengthens government control during emergency emergencies. These findings are also supported by Ukrainian empirical data, where high indices of social identity and cohesion correlate with trust in government institutions (see the results of factor analysis in this study).

The research investigates how people understand power through their moral and ethical perspectives which forms a major area of academic inquiry. Research from Bar-Tal and Halperin [3] and Hetherington and Rudolph [2] and Ceka and Magalhães [17] and Konisky et al. [18] and Teixeira da Silva [19] shows that citizens base their legitimacy assessments on how well institutions fulfill their moral duties in addition to their operational effectiveness and official authority. The study by Zaytseva and Prokofieva [20] conducted in Russia demonstrates that people base their government assessment through their moral judgment abilities and their sense of social identity and their perception of fairness. The studies by Panok et al. [21] and Naydionova and Naydionov [7] demonstrate that citizens experience

moral trauma and develop a sense of injustice which leads to collective responsibility as psychological signs which indicate state-citizen empathy and legitimacy.

Tamilina [22] studied the value-cognitive gap in Ukraine which demonstrates public support for democracy yet citizens maintain different beliefs about institutions which leads to decreasing trust in institutions. The war period brought about rising public confidence toward President and Armed Forces and regional military administrations and local authorities [23, 24]. The modifications exist only in specific contexts but scientists need to conduct additional research to validate these changes while studying the fundamental elements which form the image of power. The research conducted prior to this study showed that power legitimization or delegitimization occurs through multiple elements which include responsibility and perceived fairness and ingroup loyalty and sense of belonging and out-group attitudes [18, 19]. At the same time, there is a lack of a coherent model that would combine all these aspects in the complex reality of war.

The scientific literature reveals that power creates a complex psychological image which develops through the combination of institutional trust and justice perception and social identity and moral evaluations and political attitudes. Despite the existing theoretical developments, there is a lack of a coherent empirically supported model of this construct in wartime. This determines the relevance of the study, the results of which have not only scientific but also applied value, in particular, for the formation of strategies of state communication and strengthening social solidarity in the context of a protracted military and political crisis.

The purpose of this study is to empirically verify the structure of the psychological image of power among Ukrainian citizens in the context of a full-scale war, the relationship with key socio-psychological variables – social identity, perception of justice, institutional trust, value and ideological dispositions, civic participation and responsibility.

To achieve this goal, the following tasks were defined:

- to determine the relationship between the main components of the psychological image of power, in particular vertical institutional trust (as an indicator of legitimization and recognition of political institutions) and three types of perceived justice – procedural, interpersonal and informational;
- analyze the relationship of institutional trust to factors such as social identity, emotional response, cohesion, moral responsibility, political values, and forms of civic and socio-cultural participation;
- identify and interpret latent factors that structurally shape the psychological image of power in conditions of military instability, taking into account reverse scales and the peculiarities of the socio-political context;
- to construct a generalized empirically based model of the psychological image of power that integrates cognitive, affective, normative and value components, representing the interaction of individual experience, group identity and assessment of justice in the attitude of citizens to power.

This study has not only theoretical significance related to the development of political psychology in conflict, but also *practical value* for developing effective strategies for state communication, shaping a policy of trust, preventing the destructive impact of information warfare, and strengthening social solidarity as the basis of national unity.

Materials and Methods

The study involved 1128 respondents, aged 18 to 55 years and older, living in different parts of Ukraine, as well as in European countries (Germany, Austria, Italy); they participated in public and volunteer organizations before and after the war, and are characterized by different "types of behavior" in war conditions and religious affiliation. Ensuring the representativeness of the sample was realized through: an initial large volume with subsequent selection according to the content of the variables; the size of the subsamples that were removed from the total population was unpredictable, adjusted to take into account the need to take into account intermediate variables (age, gender); triangulation of data obtained during the traditional and online data collection procedures. The sample was also formed on the basis of the principles of quota stratification, which involves preliminary division of the general population into strata by key socio-demographic characteristics with subsequent selection of respondents within each stratum in accordance with established quotas, which ensures the representativeness of the sample in terms of certain characteristics and a sufficient level of generalizability of the results. The data was collected in the second half of 2022 and early 2023.

In order to verify the theoretical positions and explicate the empirical data obtained to identify the peculiarities of the psychological image of political power, its components in particular, and the impact on social solidarity of citizens in

the context of external military and political aggression, a survey was conducted in traditional and online formats, which contained standardized psychometric scales adapted to Ukrainian realities, followed by triangulation of the data obtained. In particular, a battery of methods and techniques was used (Modified questionnaire "Scale to Measure Social Cohesion Using a Quantitative Data Collection Survey" (USAID Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Activity) to study social solidarity of citizens; Social Identity Questionnaire by O. V. Vaskova, A. R. Graziani, S. Costarelli, R. M. Calla, A. Palmonari, M. Rubini, modified by O. B. Kovalenko). Methods of the Balanced Emotional Empathy Scale (BEES) by A. Mehrabian and N. Epstein; Methods of studying responsibility (by M. A. Ostasheva); Questionnaire "Sensitivity to Justice"; Methods for measuring procedural justice in the political sphere (long version); Methods for studying social and political orientations (by G. Aizenko). The following mathematical and statistical tools were used: principal component analysis with Varimax rotation (with Kaiser normalization) to identify latent factors in the structure of the image of power; correlation analysis (Pearson's coefficient) to identify relationships between key variables; and descriptive statistics. The sample was tested for normality of distribution and admissibility of factorization (KMO, Bartlett's test). The data was processed using SPSS v27.0. The level of statistical significance is $p < 0.05$. The study complied with the requirements of the ethical code and the provisions of the Helsinki Declaration. This approach allows us not only to describe the structural components of the image of power, but also to outline the mechanisms underlying the support of government institutions in times of war.

Results

The empirical study was carried out in stages to implement all the defined tasks and goals in order to empirically verify the structure of the psychological image of power among Ukrainian citizens in the context of a full-scale war and to identify the latent factors that shape it. First of all, the relationships between the key components of the psychological image of power were analyzed: vertical institutional trust (legitimization and recognition of power structures) and three types of perceived justice – procedural, interpersonal and informational. The results are presented in the form of a correlation matrix (Figure 1), which visualizes the strength and direction of the relationships between the indicators.

It is worth noting that the variable "Vertical Institutional Trust" is presented in an inverse scale format, which significantly affects the interpretation of the results and is methodologically fundamental in the empirical interpretation. In particular, higher values for this variable indicate a lower level of trust in government institutions, while lower values, on the contrary, reflect higher trust. At the same time, since the variable has an inverse correlation, an increase in its value (lower trust) is expected to decrease the values of other variables (if they measure similar constructs). In addition, other scales (such as internal trust, vertical social trust, general belonging, general sense of belonging to an out-group, vertical social attitudes, horizontal and vertical interaction practices, internal interaction, civic participation – both vertical and horizontal) are also inverse. This means that the interpretation should be guided by the fact that the higher the score for such variables, the lower the level of the construct being measured. *This will be taken into account when analyzing statistical relationships in the future and drawing conclusions to avoid misinterpretations of the direction of interdependencies between indicators.*

According to the results of Pearson's correlation analysis ($N = 1128$, $p < 0.01$):

- *vertical institutional trust (inverse scale) has statistically significant negative correlations with all forms of justice: $r = -0.303$ with procedural justice, $r = -0.320$ with interpersonal justice, $r = -0.306$ with informational justice (all $p < 0.01$);*
- *at the same time, there are high positive correlations between the types of justice themselves: procedural and interpersonal justice - $r = 0.841$, procedural and informational justice - $r = 0.846$, interpersonal and informational justice - $r = 0.890$.*

These results confirm the multidimensionality of *the psychological image of power*, where *trust in government, perception of justice and social legitimacy form an interdependent system*. Thus, the obtained statistically significant correlations (all at the level of $p < 0.001$) indicate a structural connection between the legitimacy of power and assessments of justice in the interaction between citizens and government structures. This emphasizes the importance of the authorities' fair treatment of citizens in forming a stable psychological image of the authorities based on trust and social support. However, since Vertical Institutional Trust is a reverse scale, the negative coefficients indicate that as the score of this variable increases (i.e., as trust in the government decreases), so do the perceptions of justice. In other words, lower trust in the government is associated with less positive perceptions of procedural, interpersonal and informational justice.

The very high positive coefficients (from 0.841 to 0.890) indicate a strong interdependence between assessments of procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice. This indicates that people who evaluate one form of justice positively tend to give similar ratings to other aspects of justice. The high positive values of correlations between the components of justice also confirm the internalized connection of these constructs, which may indicate their mutual consistency in public perception.

Vertical institutional trust	1,000	-0,303	-0,320	-0,306
Procedural justice	-0,303	1,000	0,841	0,846
Interpersonal justice	-0,320	0,841	1,000	0,890
Information justice	-0,306	0,846	0,890	1,000
	Vertical institutional trust	Procedural justice	Interpersonal justice	Information justice

Figure 1. Correlation matrix: components of the psychological image of power (N=1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of Pearson's correlation analysis (N = 1128, $p < 0.01$), two-sided test

The integration of the results of the correlation analysis into the general theoretical framework allows us to consider the psychological image of power as a triune construct formed on the basis of the cognitive, emotional, and normative-evaluative levels:

- *the cognitive level* is represented by vertical institutional trust, which in this study is presented in a reverse scale format and its level reflects a rational assessment of the ability and legitimacy of government structures to act effectively in times of war;
- *the emotional and social level* is structured through the perception of justice in interaction with others (interpersonal and informational justice), which reflects the daily experience of social interaction, mutual assistance, ethical communication and empathy;
- *the normative-evaluative level* is represented by procedural justice as an indicator of perception of legitimacy of decision-making procedures, fair access to resources and transparency of government activities.

The direction of correlations revealed in the study shows that *a higher level of perceived justice in all three dimensions is associated with lower values on the scale of vertical institutional trust, i.e., with a higher level of trust in the government. This indicates that trust in institutions is closely linked to perceptions of social justice: the more respondents perceive interaction in society to be fair, the more they tend to trust the authorities. This relationship reflects not only institutional approval but also deep moral legitimization.*

In the military context, this mechanism becomes especially relevant: *the image of power ceases to be just a symbolic category – it becomes the focus of moral judgment*, where daily justice, honesty, openness of procedures and respect for the citizen determine the level of legitimacy.

The negative correlations found between the indicators of vertical institutional trust (high values of which indicate a low level of trust) and the three forms of perceived justice – procedural, interpersonal, and informational – indicate a natural relationship: the higher the level of perceived injustice, the lower the actual trust in government institutions. These dynamics support the assumption that justice is a key predictor of legitimacy in the context of social instability and political turbulence caused by the war. At the same time, the high level of internal coherence between all three dimensions of justice demonstrates that citizens perceive justice as a single integrative construct in which all aspects mutually reinforce each other. This allows us to talk about a holistic emotional and normative structure that largely shapes the psychological image of power. In the context of political psychology, this means that trust in institutions is

not an isolated phenomenon, but is largely based on moral and ethical judgments about the behavior of the authorities, which are formed through observing the fairness of their decisions, procedures, and communication transparency.

For a deeper understanding of the psychological image of power in wartime, we analyzed the links between institutional trust and components of social interaction, such as in-group and out-group trust, social belonging, attitudes toward out-groups, and behavioral manifestations of civic and socio-cultural participation. The results are presented in the form of a compact heat map in Figure 2, which visualizes the relationships of four key indicators: institutional trust, procedural, interpersonal, and informational justice (N = 1128).

This analysis takes into account that the Vertical Institutional Trust variable is presented on an inverse scale, so a higher value corresponds to a lower level of trust, and thus all positive correlations with this variable are interpreted as negative correlations with real trust. Also, the scales of internal trust, vertical social trust, civic participation (vertical and horizontal), interaction, attitudes toward outgroups, etc. are inversely related. This feature of interpretation was taken into account when analyzing correlations with other social variables.

Internal trust	0,361	-0,145	-0,064	-0,132
External trust	-0,059	-0,118	-0,121	-0,077
Vertical social trust	0,217	0,001	-0,037	0,017
Social affiliation	0,368	-0,157	-0,141	-0,112
Guidelines for the out-group	0,276	-0,133	-0,142	-0,101
Vertical attitude towards the out-group	0,230	-0,105	-0,113	-0,114
Assessment of relations with out-groups (horizontal)	0,256	0,002	0,046	0,048
Interaction with a social group (one's own)	0,286	-0,023	0,007	-0,005
Interaction with members of out-groups	0,120	-0,059	-0,055	-0,017
Relationships with out-groups (behavioural)	0,219	-0,053	-0,021	-0,068
Civic participation (vertical)	-0,010	0,046	0,162	0,186
Civic participation (horizontal)	-0,026	-0,080	-0,070	-0,115
Sociocultural participation	-0,206	0,148	0,129	0,193
	Vertical institutional trust	Procedural justice	Interpersonal justice	Information justice

Figure 2. Correlations of institutional (vertical) trust and justice with social variables (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of Pearson's correlation analysis (N = 1128, $p < 0.01$), two-sided test

Here are the main results. As you can see from the figure:

1. Vertical institutional trust (on the reverse scale) has a statistically significant relationship with most variables. Thus, the strongest positive correlations (i.e. distrust) are observed with the following indicators: social belonging ($r = 0.368$), interaction with one's social group ($r = 0.286$), internal trust ($r = 0.361$), and assessment of relations with out-groups (horizontally) ($r = 0.219$). However, since this is an inverse scale, this increase in the coefficient means an actual decrease in trust. That is, the higher the social interaction, belonging, and trust, the lower the indicator of vertical institutional trust, and thus the higher the real trust in the government. The indicator of socio-cultural participation has a negative correlation $r = -0.206$, which in the context of the direct scale of this variable indicates that with the growth of participation, the level of institutional distrust decreases, i.e., real trust increases. The only significantly negative correlation is with socio-cultural participation ($r = -0.206$), which indicates that higher distrust of the government can coexist with more active participation in cultural and horizontal public life.

2. Justice (all three types): mostly weak negative or insignificant relationships with the variables were found, indicating moderate autonomy of the perception of justice in social contexts. The most significant relationships are: information justice ↔ socio-cultural participation ($r = 0.193$) and vertical civic participation ($r = 0.186$); interpersonal justice ↔ vertical civic participation ($r = 0.162$).

The findings show that *trust in the authorities* is closely correlated with social processes, such as a sense of belonging to a group, behavioral manifestations of solidarity, intergroup interaction, and social activity. However, it is important to emphasize that an increase in the inverse scales (e.g., internal trust or vertical social interaction) corresponds to a decrease in the real level of the relevant variable. Thus, in the context of a military situation, strong group identification, a high level of involvement in horizontal and vertical interaction practices, as well as joint forms of participation, especially socio-cultural participation, contribute to the legitimization of institutional power, reduce the perception of institutional injustice and strengthen the psychological image of power as functional and acceptable.

These results complement the general concept of the psychological image of power as a multidimensional structure in which trust is formed in relation to social inclusion, experience of interaction with groups, and involvement in public life. In the following analysis, this vector of explanation will be integrated into the final model, where social determinants play the role of mediators of trust in government institutions in wartime.

The next stage of the study was devoted to analyzing the relationships between the components of the psychological image of power and the parameters of social identity: satisfaction with membership, self-understanding, cohesion, intergroup relations, informal ties, etc.

Figure 3 visualizes a compact heat map with the results of the correlation analysis ($N = 1128$). Similarly, we take into account the methodological clarification that the variable "Vertical Institutional Trust" is an inverse scale, i.e., higher values correspond to a lower level of trust in institutions. Therefore, all positive correlations with it are interpreted as negative correlations with real trust, and negative correlations are interpreted as positive correlations.

Membership satisfaction	-0,223	0,162	0,126	0,062
Ingroup assessment	0,151	-0,169	-0,109	-0,128
Self-understanding and self-development	-0,198	0,134	0,102	0,094
Assessment of affiliation	-0,017	0,027	-0,032	-0,044
Cohesion	-0,273	0,218	0,182	0,163
Intergroup competition	-0,108	0,140	0,176	0,159
The benefits of informal relationships	-0,268	0,127	0,129	0,085

Social identity	-0,289	0,208	0,199	0,149
	Vertical institutional trust	Procedural justice	Interpersonal justice	Information justice

Figure 3. Correlations of the image of power and justice with components of social identity (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of Pearson's correlation analysis (N = 1128, $p < 0.01$), two-sided test

As can be seen from the figure, and taking into account that vertical institutional trust is a reverse scale, we can emphasize that *social identity* has the strongest relationship $r = -0.289$, i.e. the higher the level of identity, the higher the actual trust in the authorities. Similar conclusions can be drawn for: *favorable informal relations* ($r = -0.268$), *cohesion* ($r = -0.273$), and *satisfaction with membership* ($r = -0.223$). However, only *ingroup evaluation* has a positive relationship $r = 0.151$, which in the context of the reverse trust scale means that *real trust decreases with an increase in ingroup reassessment*.

In terms of procedural justice, the strongest positive correlations are observed with: *cohesion* ($r = 0.218$), *social identity* ($r = 0.208$) and *membership satisfaction* ($r = 0.162$). Interpersonal justice has the strongest correlations with: *social identity* ($r = 0.199$), *cohesion* ($r = 0.182$), and *intergroup competition* ($r = 0.176$). Information justice has the strongest correlations with: *cohesion* ($r = 0.163$), *intergroup competition* ($r = 0.159$), and *social identity* ($r = 0.149$).

The findings clearly outline the connection between the psychological image of power, indirectly measured through *institutional trust*, and key parameters of *social identity*. It was found that *real trust in the government* increases with the strengthening of such aspects of group involvement as *membership satisfaction*, *cohesion*, *positive interaction*, and *a sense of belonging*. This suggests that in times of war, it is *social identity that acts as a buffer* that forms a more favorable image of the government by strengthening the sense of group unity and trust in institutions.

In the context of *political psychology*, we can talk about *the emotional and cognitive integration of the image of power*, where institutional trust is not only an indicator of the state's effectiveness, but also a derivative of the level of identification with the group and the perception of the fairness of government decisions.

Along with cognitive (trust in institutions) and normative-evaluative (justice) factors, *affective components* play a key role in the psychological image of power, in particular, *emotional response*, which reflects the depth of emotional reaction to government institutions, policies, and socio-political events. To this end, the correlation structure included *an emotional response scale* that measures the level of emotional involvement, sympathy, or antipathy toward the socio-political system. The results are presented in *Figure 4*.

Vertical institutional trust	1,000	-0,303	-0,320	-0,306	-0,135
Procedural justice	-0,303	1,000	0,841	0,846	-0,063
Interpersonal justice	-0,320	0,841	1,000	0,890	-0,026
Information justice	-0,306	0,846	0,890	1,000	-0,022
Emotional response scale	-0,135	-0,063	-0,026	-0,022	1,000
	Vertical institutional trust	Procedural justice	Interpersonal justice	Information justice	Emotional response scale

Figure 4. Correlations of psychological image of power and emotional response (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of Pearson's correlation analysis (N = 1128, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$), two-sided test

To begin with, it is important to clarify that the Vertical Institutional Trust variable has the opposite direction of the scale – higher values indicate a lower level of trust. This must be taken into account when interpreting: a negative correlation with another variable means that as the other variable increases, trust in the government increases.

Thus, the obtained indicators indicate a moderate negative relationship between the level of vertical institutional trust and the perception of procedural justice ($r = -0.303$; $p < 0.01$), which actually means that the fairer citizens consider administrative and governmental procedures, the higher their level of trust in government institutions. The research shows that interpersonal justice which means government officials should treat citizens with respect and fairness directly affects institutional trust ($r = -0.320$; $p < 0.01$).

Information fairness, i.e. openness and honesty in the transmission of information by the authorities, also proved to be important. The research findings showed that public trust in institutions depends on government communication transparency because their relationship reached a statistically significant level of -0.306 ($p < 0.01$).

The study discovered a small but significant negative relationship between citizens' emotional involvement and their trust in institutional power ($r = -0.135$; $p < 0.01$). The results indicate that citizens' emotional connection with their community and their sense of empathy and solidarity between community members leads to increased trust in institutional authority.

The three types of justice maintain internal connections which need specific analysis. There are high positive correlations between:

- procedural and interpersonal justice ($r = 0.841$; $p < 0.01$);

The research established a strong positive relationship between procedural and informational fairness because the correlation reached $r = 0.846$ ($p < 0.01$).

The research findings demonstrated that staff members who received superior procedural justice treatment also received higher levels of informational justice and interpersonal justice ($r = 0.890$; $p < 0.01$).

The research findings show that people view justice as a complete social system which they experience through multiple aspects. Thus, an increase in one aspect of justice is usually accompanied by an increase in other forms of justice, which creates a favorable context for strengthening trust in state institutions.

The findings suggest that trust in the government (as well as its psychological image in general) is derived from the perception of justice and emotional interaction of citizens with social and governmental structures. The main factors which determine legitimization include:

- The process of decision-making becomes fair when everyone can see its equal treatment of all people and when all members receive identical treatment.
- interpersonal justice – respect for citizens as subjects;
- information justice requires all communication to be open and sincere and honest.

The emotional response serves as an indicator which shows how much a person identifies with the group while also demonstrating their empathetic connection and their willingness to support others.

Thus, once again, the results prove that in the context of war, the psychological image of power is formed as a multidimensional one, including: a cognitive component (assessments of justice), an affective component (emotional response) and trust as a generalized indicator of legitimacy. The growth of justice throughout government operations along with rising social emotional connection toward institutions results in higher public trust toward these organizations. The government needs to maintain its legitimacy during wartime because this factor determines how well the nation stays united and how effectively people can be motivated for war efforts.

In this block of empirical verification, we analyzed the relationships between the components of the psychological image of power and basic *political and moral values*: from the level of permissiveness, religiosity, and liberalism to reactionariness, racism, pacifism, and support for socialist principles. The results are visualized in Figure 5.

Permissibility	-0,029	0,144	0,070	0,111
Racism	0,054	0,150	0,166	0,157
Religiousness	-0,029	-0,085	-0,031	-0,052
Socialism	0,107	-0,176	-0,201	-0,187
Liberalism	0,217	0,014	-0,048	-0,044
Reactivity	0,158	-0,061	0,003	0,017
Pacifism	0,102	0,074	0,059	0,171
	Vertical institutional trust	Procedural justice	Interperso- nal justice	Informa- tion justice

Figure 5. Correlations of the image of power and justice with ideological value orientations (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of Pearson's correlation analysis (N = 1128, $p < 0.01$, $p < 0.05$), two-sided test

The correlation analysis revealed a number of statistically significant relationships between institutional trust, perception of justice and basic ideological orientations of respondents. It should be emphasized that the variable "Vertical Institutional Trust" is presented on an inverse scale, i.e., an increase in its values indicates a decrease in the real level of trust in government institutions. This fact was taken into account when interpreting all statistical dependencies.

It was found that *the liberal orientation of respondents correlates with a decrease in trust in the government* ($r = 0.217$; $p < 0.01$), which, in the context of reverse coding, indicates a critical or distanced attitude to government structures among holders of liberal values. A similar trend can be observed in relation to *reactionary* ($r = 0.158$; $p < 0.01$), *socialist* ($r = 0.107$; $p < 0.01$) and *pacifist* ($r = 0.102$; $p < 0.01$) beliefs: the more clearly these ideological orientations are defined, the lower the level of real trust in institutional power. In contrast, the variables *permissiveness*, *racism*, and *religiosity* did not show statistically significant relationships with vertical institutional trust.

The institutional and evaluative components of the psychological image of power, in particular *procedural justice*, showed positive correlations with such ideologies as *permissiveness* ($r = 0.144$; $p < 0.01$), *racism* ($r = 0.150$; $p < 0.01$), and *pacifism* ($r = 0.074$; $p < 0.05$). At the same time, *socialist orientation* showed an inverse relationship with procedural justice ($r = -0.176$; $p < 0.01$), which may indicate a critical assessment of the principles and processes of government decision-making among supporters of social equality. A similar trend is observed in relation to *religiosity*, which also has a negative, albeit weaker, relationship with procedural justice ($r = -0.085$; $p < 0.05$).

The indicators of *interpersonal justice*, which focuses on equality, respect and dignity in intergroup interaction, are significantly correlated with *racism* ($r = 0.166$; $p < 0.01$), indicating a paradoxical combination of prejudiced and at the same time fairly sensitive attitudes in some respondents. At the same time, there is a clear negative correlation between interpersonal justice and *socialist attitudes* ($r = -0.201$; $p < 0.01$).

Information justice, as a characteristic of transparency in government communication, also showed positive correlations with *pacifism* ($r = 0.171$; $p < 0.01$), *racism* ($r = 0.157$; $p < 0.01$), and *permissiveness* ($r = 0.111$; $p < 0.01$). Instead, it is inversely related to *socialism* ($r = -0.187$; $p < 0.01$), which confirms the general distrust of information policy on the part of citizens with strong center-left views.

The results of the study show that *ideological orientations of citizens are an important predictor of perception of justice, as well as trust in the government* as the cognitive core of its psychological image. In particular, *liberal, socialist, pacifist, and reactionary orientations* are associated with a *critical perception of institutional legitimacy*, and the perception of *justice* in the procedural, interpersonal, and informational dimensions demonstrates a complex interaction with the relevant political beliefs. This makes it possible to interpret the *psychological image of power as a structure that is formed in the field of cultural, ideological and value influences*, which is especially relevant in the context of the military-political crisis.

The results of the correlation analysis show that *trust in institutional power*, as one of the key indicators of the psychological image of power, has *clear links with the ideological orientations of the individual*. In particular, an increase in adherence to *liberal, reactionary, socialist, and pacifist* views is associated with a *decrease in the real level of trust in government institutions*. This confirms the hypothesis of a *critical distance between the citizen and the state among people with high ideological activity*.

In turn, the *perception of justice* – procedural, interpersonal, and informational – turned out to be *moderately* related to certain ideological ideologies. In particular, *socialist orientations* are negatively related to all forms of justice, which may indicate an increased sensitivity to social inequality and an assessment of state procedures as biased. These results suggest that in times of war, *citizens' ideological beliefs influence the formation of trust in the government*, which in turn determines the effectiveness of state legitimization, the stability of the social order, and the degree of emotional solidarity in society.

In order to reveal the moral and psychological dimensions of the image of power, the links between *institutional trust, justice, and types of responsibility: disciplinary, personal, and responsibility for another* were analyzed. These components allow us to assess how power perceptions are related to ethical obligations, moral autonomy, and social sensitivity. The results are visualized in Figure 6.

Disciplinary responsibility	0,029	-0,131	-0,125	-0,085
Responsibility for oneself	0,017	-0,160	-0,071	-0,095
Responsibility for another person	-0,172	-0,077	-0,042	-0,039
	Vertical institutional trust	Procedural justice	Interpersonal justice	Informational justice

Figure 6. Correlations of the image of power and justice with types of responsibility (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of Pearson's correlation analysis (N = 1128, $p < 0.01$), two-sided test

Further analysis revealed specifics of the relationship between *images of power, perceptions of justice, and different types of responsibility*. Particular attention should be paid to the interpretation of the data related to the variable "*Vertical Institutional Trust*", which is presented in a *reverse scale*. Accordingly, *negative values of correlation coefficients indicate a positive relationship with real trust in the government*.

In particular, there was a statistically significant inverse relationship between *responsibility for others* and vertical institutional trust ($r = -0.172$; $p < 0.001$). This indicates that *the growth of socially oriented responsibility*, which includes elements of empathy, care and willingness to act in the interests of others, *is positively related to trust in government institutions*. In other words, respondents who demonstrate a more pronounced sense of responsibility for others are more likely to recognize the legitimacy of the government.

At the same time, the correlation between vertical institutional trust and *disciplinary* ($r = 0.029$; $p = 0.323$) and *personal responsibility* ($r = 0.017$; $p = 0.576$) did not reveal statistical significance. This suggests that *individualized forms of responsibility do not play a decisive role in shaping the image of power*, unlike socially oriented ones.

The analysis of the relationship between *justice* and accountability revealed *mostly weak but statistically significant inverse correlations*. Thus, *procedural fairness* is negatively correlated with all types of responsibility: *responsibility for oneself* ($r = -0.160$; $p < 0.001$), *disciplinary* ($r = -0.131$; $p < 0.001$) and *social* ($r = -0.077$; $p < 0.01$). This suggests that *the perception of procedural injustice reduces readiness for responsible behavior*, probably due to the erosion of the sense of reciprocity in the relationship between the citizen and the state.

Similar trends are observed in the case of *interpersonal justice*, which is most strongly related to *disciplinary responsibility* ($r = -0.125$; $p < 0.001$) and *responsibility for oneself* ($r = -0.071$; $p < 0.05$). These results demonstrate

that *fairness in interpersonal interaction within power structures also affects the internal ethical attitudes of respondents.*

For its part, *information justice* – as an indicator of transparency and honesty in government communication – demonstrates a significant but moderate negative relationship with *disciplinary responsibility* ($r = -0.085$; $p < 0.01$) and *personal responsibility* ($r = -0.095$; $p < 0.01$). The findings suggest that *a lower level of transparency in government communication reduces the willingness of citizens to take responsibility for compliance with established norms and requirements.*

The obtained results allow us to interpret *the psychological image of power* as a multifactorial formation, in which *trust in institutional power* is partly determined by *the level of social responsibility of a person*, in particular, the willingness to be responsible not only for oneself but also for other members of society. The *negative correlation between vertical institutional trust and responsibility for others* suggests that *a sense of solidarity, empathy, and collective involvement increases trust in state institutions, even in times of war.*

In addition, *all forms of justice-procedural, interpersonal, and informational-have weakly negative but significant relationships with responsibility*, which indicates *the fragility of the social contract* between the government and the citizen: *the feeling of injustice in interaction with the state reduces the moral readiness of a person to act responsibly.*

In the structure of the psychological image of power, responsibility is *an ethical and behavioral marker of trust in the state*. The existence of a statistically significant relationship between socially oriented forms of responsibility and trust confirms that *the psychological legitimacy of power is based not only on rational assessments, but also on the moral and social experience of interaction with the state.*

In order to better understand the latent structure of the psychological image of power, the principal components method with varimax rotation (Kaiser normalization) was applied. The analysis included 37 standardized variables (Z-values) covering social perceptions, moral dispositions, cognitive assessments of power, identity, political values, and forms of social participation. The rotation converged in 6 iterations, which indicates sufficient factor clarity of the structure (Figure 7).

The factor analysis was conducted taking into account the peculiarities of the metric characteristics of the studied variables. In particular, it is important to take into account that a number of scales in this study have a *reverse coding direction*. This applies to such variables as *vertical institutional trust, internal trust, vertical social trust, social belonging, vertical social attitudes, civic participation (horizontal and vertical), interaction with outgroup members, etc.* In such cases, *higher values are interpreted as a lower level of the corresponding characteristic*, which is critical for a correct understanding of the empirical relationships within the factor model.

In the framework of Principal Component Analysis, we calculated communalities, which reflect the degree of participation of each variable in explaining the latent structure of the psychological image of power. High values of communalities indicate that the variable is significantly determined by the selected factors and plays a key role in the formation of a holistic image.

The highest commonality values were found in the following variables:

- *social identity (0.935),*
- *interpersonal justice (0.825),*
- *information justice (0.813),*
- *procedural justice (0.791),*
- *cohesion (0.789),*
- *self-understanding and self-development (0.760),*
- *awareness of their own injustice (0.751),*
- *satisfaction with community membership (0.742),*
- *favorability of informal social contacts (0.741),*
- *observing unfair treatment of others (0.735).*

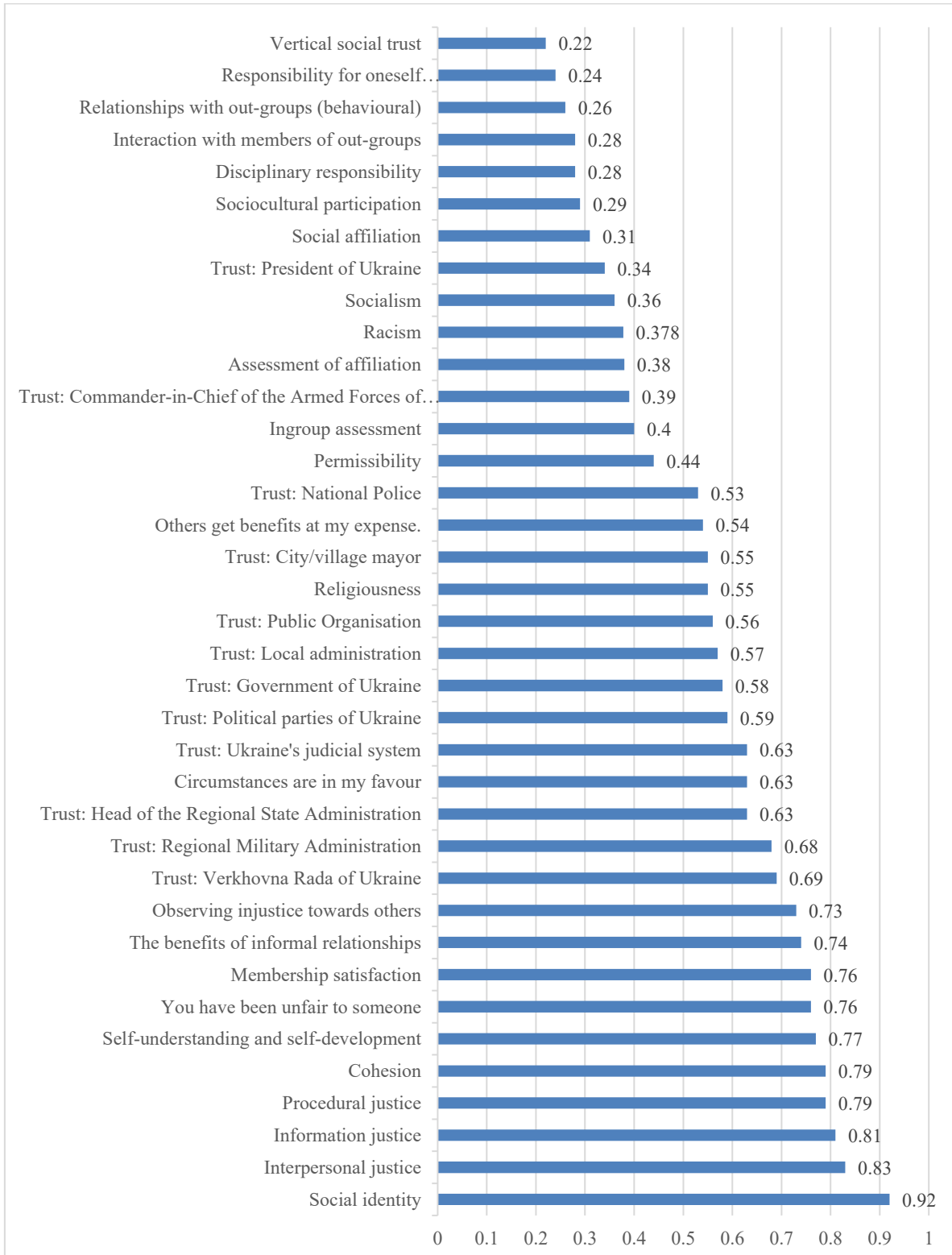


Figure 7. The degree of inclusion of variables in the general factor structure of the psychological image of power (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of principal component analysis using varimax rotation (Kaiser normalization) (N = 1128)

These variables form the *core of the psychological image of power*, which in the minds of citizens acts as a multidimensional structure that integrates *emotional and social involvement, normative perception of justice, and group identification*. The findings confirm the hypothesis that *the legitimacy of government in wartime is based not only on institutional or cognitive factors, but also on the emotional and value-based interaction between the state and civil society*.

At the same time, variables with a *moderate or low level of commonality* were identified, indicating that they are *relatively poorly integrated* into the overall factor structure. In particular:

- *vertical social trust (0.227)*,
- *responsibility for oneself (0.231)*,
- *behavioral relationships with outgroups (0.248)*,
- *disciplinary responsibility (0.258)*,
- *social affiliation (0.289)*.

These variables demonstrate *autonomy or peripherality in the context of legitimizing power*, which is likely due to their more individualized or situational nature.

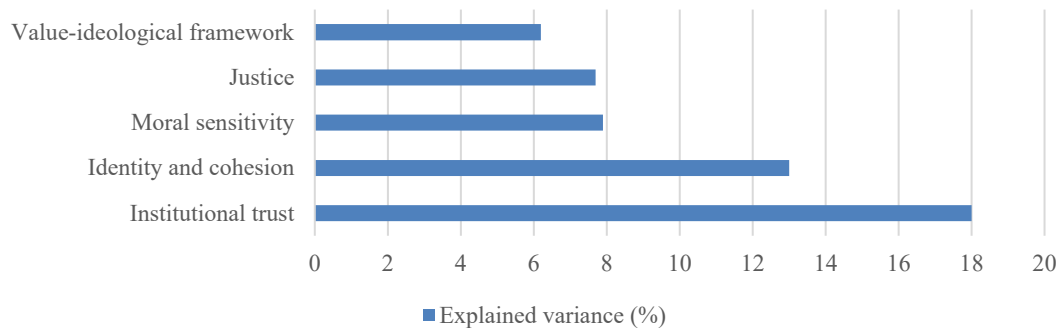


Figure 8. Quantitative representation of the contribution of each factor to the structure of the psychological image of power (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of principal component analysis using varimax rotation (Kaiser normalization) (N = 1128)

Factor analysis with varimax rotation allowed us to identify five latent components that collectively explain 53.996% of the variance in the main scales of trust, justice, moral judgment, value orientations, identity, and participation. Particular attention was paid to the inverse nature of the vertical institutional trust variable and a number of social scales. This clarification was critical to prevent misinterpretations of the direction of the relationships between the indicators. This level of variance explanation is acceptable for political and psychological constructs that have a multidirectional nature and considerable conceptual depth (Figure 8).

As can be seen from the figure, each of them represents a separate content area of political perception, which forms the integral structure of the psychological image of power in times of war. We interpret each of the factors in detail, taking into account the specifics of the scales, in particular the reverse direction of the variable "vertical institutional trust" and a number of social variables.

Factor 1. Institutional trust as a cognitive core of legitimacy (18.33% of variance). This factor groups variables that reflect the level of trust in key government institutions – parliament, government, judiciary, military and administrative structures, political parties, police and local governments. The highest loadings are for: trust in the regional military administration (0.801), the head of the military administration (0.780), the Verkhovna Rada (0.776), the judiciary (0.762), the government (0.726), and civil society organizations (0.719). The high factor loadings (from 0.696 to 0.801) demonstrate that these elements are seen as the cognitive basis of political legitimacy, which is formed through the experience of observing the effectiveness, transparency, and competence of the authorities. Given that "vertical institutional trust" is a reverse scale, a decrease in its value in the factor structure corresponds to an increase in the real level of government legitimacy.

Factor 2: Identity and cohesion as a socio-affective basis of loyalty (13.19% of variance). The second factor reflects the emotional and social component related to the experience of oneself as part of a community: social identity (0.947), cohesion (0.870), self-understanding and self-development (0.868), satisfaction with membership (0.850), and favorable informal relationships (0.826). The factor demonstrates that loyalty to the government is based not only on rational assessment, but also on positive affective immersion in a group that performs a symbolic and supportive function. In times of war, such identification has a mobilizing value – it ensures internal cohesion and subjective acceptance of the political order, even in times of high threats and instability.

Factor 3. Moral and ethical sensitivity to injustice (8.15% of variance). This factor includes variables related to the reflection of personal and social injustice: "you see someone being treated unfairly" (0.853), "you have acted unfairly" (0.784), "circumstances are in my favor" (0.784), "others are taking advantage at my expense" (0.635). This indicates the high role of the moral dimension in the image of power. In the context of war and general tension, this component actualizes expectations of ethical consistency on the part of the authorities, reducing tolerance for double standards, corruption or discrimination.

Factor 4. Justice as a normative basis for political legitimacy (7.86% of variance). This factor structurally reflects the normative perceptions of justice in three dimensions: interpersonal (0.867), informational (0.861) and procedural (0.846). Together, they constitute the normative core of legitimacy, where power is considered acceptable not so much by results as by compliance with rules, transparency, and honesty. This model of legitimation is especially important in times of crisis decisions and security constraints. This component is closely correlated with institutional trust in an inverse way, i.e. the higher the level of perceived fairness, the lower the level of vertical institutional distrust.

Factor 5: Values and ideological framework for interpreting power (6.46% of variance). The fifth factor is related to the basic attitudes of individuals regarding religion (0.694), permissiveness (-0.623), racism (0.455), socialism (0.430), responsibility (0.454), and assessment of belonging (0.604). We are talking about the influence of ideological categories on the interpretation of government actions. These variables act as mental filters that set the framework for political judgment: the government is either approved or rejected depending on the correspondence of its actions to the respondent's deep value orientations.

The conducted factor analysis allowed us to empirically confirm the multidimensional structure of the psychological image of power that is formed as a result of integration:

- *cognitive (institutional trust);*
- *affective and social (identity, cohesion);*
- *normative (justice);*
- *moral and ethical (reflection on injustice);*
- *value and ideological (worldview) subsystems.*

It is particularly important that the variable "vertical institutional trust" turned out to be inverse in this structure, which requires careful interpretation in the context of the results: higher values actually mean lower levels of real trust in the government. Accordingly, all correlations with the variables of justice, identity, participation, and morality should be interpreted with this principle in mind.

Thus, the findings empirically confirm the hypothesis that not only the functional effectiveness of institutions plays a key role in the perception of power, but also the compliance of their actions with citizens' expectations of moral justice, social solidarity, and ethical legitimacy, especially in the context of armed conflict.

In the study, factor analysis was used to identify the latent structure of the perception of institutional trust as the cognitive core of political legitimacy. At the same time, special emphasis was placed on the inverse nature of the variable "vertical institutional trust", which requires a specific approach to its interpretation: the higher the score on this scale, the lower the actual level of trust in institutions. Thus, the task was to empirically verify which institutional units form a single factor of political trust in wartime, which of them have the highest psychological significance, and how the total variance is distributed among the factors underlying institutional legitimacy.

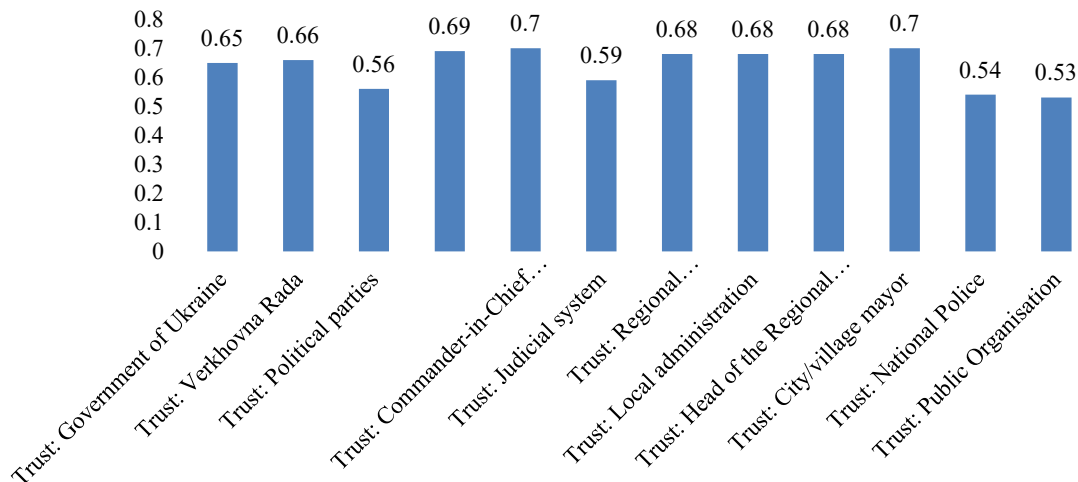


Figure 9. Level of factor load of individual indicators in the overall structure of institutional trust (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author based on the results of principal component analysis using varimax rotation (Kaiser normalization) (N = 1128)

In total, the level of communalities for 12 institutional variables representing the vertical component of trust in government was studied. The values of the communalities range from 0.529 to 0.702, which indicates a good explanatory power of these indicators within the factor model.

The highest values of communalities are observed for:

- *city/village head (0.702);*
- *commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (0.700);*
- *heads of IABs (0.683);*
- *president of Ukraine (0.687);*
- *local administration (0.679).*

These indicators indicate a high degree of involvement of local and strategic state actors in the cognitive core of the image of power. At the same time, the indicators of trust in political parties (0.559) and civil society organizations (0.529) have a slightly lower weight, which may indicate a crisis of representation and limited institutional integration of the civil sector into the legitimacy structure.

The analysis of communalities allows us to formulate several important conclusions:

1. Geo-institutional effect: institutions that have direct contact with citizens (local authorities, heads of CMAs) show a higher integration in the perception of power. This indicates the growing role of decentralized forms of governance in the context of war.

2. Militarized trust: high scores for the President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces reflect the increased role of the security component in the legitimacy structure.

3. Reverse interpretation: it should be emphasized that these variables are interpreted in the context of a reverse scale – that is, the lower the numerical value, the higher the level of real trust, which is critical in drawing conclusions.

Thus, the findings suggest that in wartime, the cognitive legitimacy of the authorities is based primarily on the functionality of key governance institutions, the security competence of leaders, and the involvement of local authorities in social governance processes.

In the empirical study of the psychological image of power in the context of the Russian-Ukrainian war, special attention was paid to identifying the latent structure of citizens' institutional trust. The purpose of the factor analysis was to find out the deeper content components of trust in state institutions that form the cognitive component of the psychological image of power. Particular attention is paid to the reverse scale of vertical institutional trust, according to which higher values indicate a lower level of trust in institutions, which requires special consideration when interpreting the results.

Factor analysis was carried out in stages, in accordance with the generally accepted logic of processing psychological scales:

1. *The first stage* involved performing a principal component analysis without rotation to determine the total number of latent structures and the percentage of variance explained. Two principal components were identified, which together explain 63.77% of the variance. This level is sufficient for further structuring of the factor space.

2. *The second stage* was to apply the method of orthogonal varimax rotation, which allows for a clearer distinction of factors by content and improves interpretability. The obtained results revealed a stable and bivariate structure of institutional trust (Figure 10).

Trust: city/village mayor	0,836	0,000
Trust: local (municipal/rural) administration	0,812	0,000
Trust: Head of the Regional State Administration	0,790	0,000
Trust: National Police of Ukraine	0,701	0,000
Trust: Regional Military Administration	0,680	0,462
Trust: Public organisations	0,668	0,000
Trust: Ukraine's judicial system	0,603	0,475
Trust: Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine	0,600	0,544
Trust: political parties of Ukraine	0,564	0,491
Trust: Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine	0,000	0,827
Trust: President of Ukraine	0,000	0,821
Trust: Government of Ukraine – Cabinet of Ministers	0,505	0,632
	Component 1	Component 2

Figure 10. Factor loadings of variables by two principal components after applying Varimax rotation (N = 1128)
Source: compiled by the author based on the results of principal component analysis using varimax rotation (Kaiser normalization) (N = 1128)

After the rotation, the first component explains 39.24% of the variance, and the second component explains 24.53%. In total, they cover more than 63% of the changes in the confidence scale, which is a fairly high indicator of statistical reliability.

- component 1 ("Rational-Institutional Trust") includes high factor loadings on trust in: city/village mayor (0.836), local administration (0.812), the head of the SAI (0.790), the National Police (0.701), civil society organizations (0.668), the judiciary (0.603), the Verkhovna Rada (0.600), political parties (0.564) and the government (0.505);
- component 2 ("Charismatic trust") covers trust in the President of Ukraine (0.821) and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces (0.827). The Cabinet of Ministers (0.632), the Verkhovna Rada (0.544) and the Judiciary (0.475) have partial loadings, indicating a mixed nature of this factor.

The first component reflects structural legitimacy and forms the cognitive dimension of the psychological image of power. Its content is focused on the level of functional trust in institutions representing the system of power at different

levels – local, regional, and central. High factor loadings indicate the importance of these institutions in the consciousness of citizens as holders of power. In the context of the reverse scale, high values for this component reflect a crisis of confidence in traditional institutions during the war.

The second component represents the charismatic dimension of legitimation and personalized trust in leaders. The President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces act as symbols of protection, stability, and moral confidence. This component forms the emotional dimension of the image of power, based on loyalty, faith and expectations from specific figures who personify national resistance and statehood.

Thus, the structure of institutional trust is two-component and includes cognitive-rational (structural) and emotional-charismatic (personalized) subsystems. The reverse direction of the vertical institutional trust scale determines that a high factor weight does not mean a high level of trust, but rather fixes its deficit, which requires a correct interpretation. The empirical results indicate a split psychological image of power: Institutions as formal actors arouse skepticism, while charismatic leaders concentrate residual trust and serve as a psychological stabilizer in wartime. Thus, the described components are key to understanding the multidimensional structure of legitimacy in crisis contexts and form the basis for further analysis of the relationship between the cognitive and the emotional in the image of power.

The results of the empirical study allow us to move from the analysis of isolated statistical relationships to the synthesis of a multidimensional structure that represents a holistic view of the psychological image of power in war. The identified correlations between trust in government institutions, perception of different forms of justice, level of social identification, participation and moral responsibility, as well as the results of factor analysis, indicate the presence of latent integrative formations that form a deep cognitive-affective matrix of citizens' attitudes toward government.

The overall picture of empirical data indicates that the psychological image of power is not one-dimensional or reduced to assessing the effectiveness of state institutions. On the contrary, it appears as a complex system in which rational judgments of legitimacy, emotional reactions to government actions, identification processes, moral guidelines, and attitudes toward justice and social interaction interact. War conditions significantly transform and exacerbate these interrelationships, bringing to the fore the issues of moral legitimacy, transparency of decisions, the mobilization function of the government, and civic solidarity.

In order to interpret this complex multifactorial reality and theoretically and empirically generalize the results obtained, it is advisable to build a generalized *empirical model of the psychological image of power*, which reflects the structural and functional components of this phenomenon, their interrelationships and contextual conditionality. The following part of the article presents a step-by-step description of this model, the theoretical justification of its main blocks, mechanisms of interaction between them, as well as empirical evidence based on the statistical analysis.

The psychological image of power is considered in modern political psychology as a complex cognitive-affective construct that encompasses citizens' perceptions of the legitimacy, effectiveness, moral justification, and emotional acceptability of power as an institutional entity [2, 3]. In wartime, this construct becomes strategically important as a mechanism for internal mobilization, legitimization of the state order, and preservation of social cohesion. The model presented in this study integrates the provisions of a number of classical and modern conceptual approaches:

- the social identity theory [13] argues that individual perceptions of power are inextricably linked to the process of identification with the social group on whose behalf the state acts. In times of war, such identification can increase the willingness to trust and support the government as part of one's group membership.
- the model of procedural justice [1] proves that the legitimacy of the government largely depends not only on the results of its activities, but also on the extent to which citizens consider its decisions to be fair, transparent and open. In the military context, the importance of information justice – honest communication and consistent representation of citizens' interests – is especially growing;
- approaches to institutional trust [2, 17] emphasize that trust in government is a key indicator of legitimacy, which ensures the stability of the political order and predictability of citizens' interaction with the state.

The Ukrainian scientific research field receives additional support from these provisions which scientists can verify through their research. Kochubeinyk [5] examines the elements of political legitimacy which Ukraine experienced during hybrid warfare through his research about how social identity affects public trust in government institutions. The higher the level of identification with the Ukrainian political community, the higher the tendency to consider the government legitimate and capable of protecting national interests. Dziuba [6] shows that civic participation operates through a system which people use to assess institutional moral standards and social bond strength which affects their trust in public institutions and their willingness to support the government during civil disturbances. The researcher

pays special attention to the sense of responsibility of citizens as a factor in the legitimization of government decisions [6]. The research by Naydionova and Naydionov [7] investigates power through psychological methods to determine its ability to create national unity. She explains that wartime value mobilization requires citizens to recognize their government defends common national interests while they must trust their leaders and believe the system provides equal treatment to everyone. Panok et al. [21] investigates how psychological trauma affects how people view their ability to exert control. The authors explain that power images shift after collective shocks like war based on how much emotional backing people show and their perception of fairness and their national devotion which serve as fundamental social control elements. Vasiutynskyi [25] explains that people understand power through their historical and cultural background and their shared memories and their feeling of belonging to their native land. In his concept of the "psychological coordinates of the Ukrainian world," the author considers the government as part of the moral landscape of society, and its legitimacy as a function of the compliance of political decisions with the value expectations of citizens. Gubeladze [26] emphasizes the importance of a collective sense of ownership of the state, where power is perceived as "one's own" only if the citizen is involved in the processes of control, participation, and symbolic belonging. In the case of alienation, the image of power becomes fragmented and conflictogenic. Golovakha and Makeiev [27] argues that trust in the government in the context of military aggression is not only an indicator of political stability but also a marker of psychological cohesion. The author emphasizes the connection between the level of solidarity, national identity, and acceptance of government structures. Kochubeinyk [5], analyzing the psychological reality in emergency situations, points out the importance of perceiving power as "one's own" and capable of protecting, not just managing. In her interpretation, the image of power in a crisis is both a resource and a threat to the individual's psyche. Dovhan [28] studies social responsibility as a psychological predictor of trust: in conditions of solidarity, responsibility for the common good increases the legitimacy of government decisions, even if they restrict individual freedoms. Dukhnevych [29] introduces the concept of "negative psychological phenomena in the political and legal sphere," in particular, the erosion of trust, reduced responsibility, and frustration as a reaction to a sense of injustice. The image of power in this context is the result of a moral assessment, not just institutional contact. All of the above provisions allow us to conceptualize the psychological image of power not as an isolated phenomenon, but as a *system of interaction of rational, emotional, moral, and social identification processes*, in which power appears both as a real institution and as a symbol of the national common.

Thus, *the national context of war* gives the psychological image of power a special significance: power becomes not just an object of rational evaluation, but a *subject of moral expectation, solidarity, and emotional resonance*. This allows us to move on to empirical analysis and the construction of an integral model based on both classical theoretical concepts and the modern Ukrainian empirical field of research.

Based on the results of a large-scale empirical study (N = 1128), a generalized multidimensional model of the psychological image of power was formed, reflecting the deep connections between institutional trust, perception of justice, emotional involvement, social identity, participation, and political orientations. The model is based on the results of a stepwise correlation and factor analysis using 37 variables standardized by Z-score. The total variance explained by the identified factors is 53.996%, which is acceptable in political psychology research.

The structure of the empirical model includes the following factors and their content:

Institutional trust as a cognitive core of legitimacy (Factor 1, 18.33% of variance). This component combines assessments of trust in the main government institutions, from the President to local self-government. It forms *the rational basis of the psychological image of the government*, indicating the ability of institutions to effectively govern, maintain order and ensure security.

Identity and cohesion as a socio-affective basis of loyalty (Factor 2, 13.19%). This factor includes variables related to cohesion, social identity, informal ties, and a sense of belonging to a group. It reflects *the affective-identification aspect*, according to which support for the government depends on the depth of involvement in the national and local community.

Moral and ethical sensitivity to injustice (Factor 3, 8.15%). This component structures *the ethical core of the image of power*, reflecting the degree of personal experience of unfair treatment, as well as reflections on the morality of the state's actions.

Justice as a normative basis for political legitimacy (Factor 4, 7.86%). It includes three types of justice – procedural, interpersonal and informational – which are *normative and evaluative criteria* for the legitimacy of power, especially in crisis conditions, when trust depends on transparency and equal access to decisions and resources.

Value and ideological framework for interpreting power (Factor 5, 6.46%). This factor combines the political and moral dispositions of respondents, including religiosity, pacifism, socialism, racism, and permissiveness, which form a *mental framework* for interpreting the actions of the authorities. Such a framework can contribute to both approval and delegitimization of the governmental order, depending on the degree of value conformity.

The obtained correlation matrices confirm the presence of:

- *high positive correlations* between all three types of justice ($r = 0.841 - 0.890$, $p < 0.001$);
- *statistically significant negative relationships* between institutional trust (in the reverse dimension) and: procedural justice ($r = -0.303$), informational justice ($r = -0.306$), interpersonal justice ($r = -0.320$), social identity ($r = -0.289$), cohesion ($r = -0.273$), and socio-cultural participation ($r = -0.206$).

These relationships show that trust in the government increases with increased justice, emotional engagement, participation, and social inclusion (Figure 11).

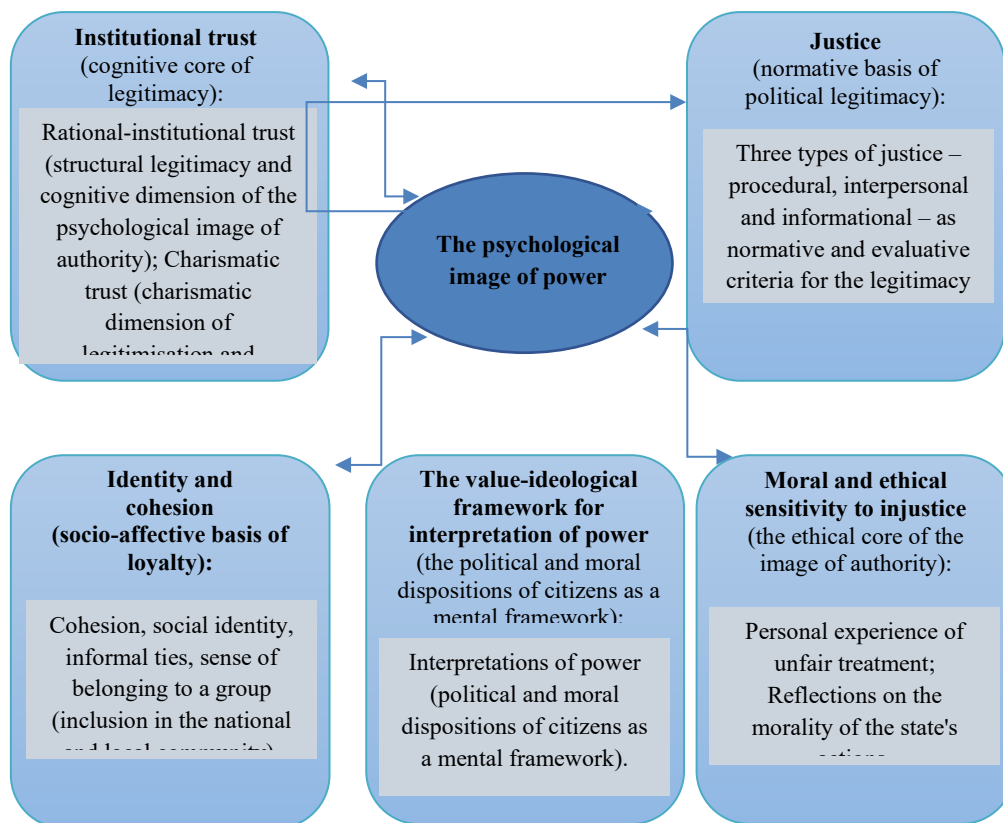


Figure 11. Empirical model of the psychological image of power (N = 1128)

Source: compiled by the author on the basis of summarizing the results of Pearson's correlation analysis ($p < 0.01$), two-sided test and principal component analysis using varimax rotation (Kaiser normalization) (N = 1128)

The model shows the presence of intermediary effects (mediation):

- social identity and cohesion act as mediators between emotional response and trust, i.e., emotionally positive attitudes toward the government increase trust through a growing sense of community;
- justice (especially procedural justice) mediates between ideological dispositions and trust in the government;
- social responsibility is a mediator between a sense of justice and emotional loyalty.

Thus, the model reflects *the complex determinism of the image of power*, which is formed at the intersection of institutional, value, moral, ethical, and affective-identification influences. The empirical model of the psychological image of power formed in a full-scale war demonstrates the following key properties:

- multidimensionality, which includes five structurally distinct but interrelated factors;
- the mutual reinforcement of cognitive, emotional, normative, and moral elements that together ensure the subjective legitimacy of power;
- the significant role of social identity, social cohesion (national, civic) and responsibility (social and moral) as factors of psychological stability and solidarity of civil society;
- vulnerability of the model to factors of injustice and social exclusion that reduce the level of institutional trust.

In the context of the political and psychological resilience of Ukrainian society, the model confirms that *trust in the government is not only a product of functional assessment of its effectiveness*, but is rooted in the moral experience, value context, and emotional solidarity of the nation. Thus, *the psychological image of power is formed at the intersection of functional rationality and symbolic identity*, reflecting social adaptation to the conditions of war and a new structure of civic legitimization. *The psychological image of power in Ukraine during the war is a holistic, emotionally and identifiably rich construction* that simultaneously reflects the level of legitimization, solidarity, security and expectations for justice.

Discussion

The results of the study empirically confirm the hypothesis that the psychological image of power in a full-scale war has a complex multidimensional structure formed in the interaction of cognitive, emotional, normative-value and social-identification factors. The five empirically verified factors which include institutional trust and justice and identity and cohesion and moral and ethical sensitivity and value and ideological framework enable us to understand power as a complex system which extends beyond state trust.

In particular, institutional trust – the central cognitive link of the model – in the factor analysis is divided into two substructures: rational-institutional (structural) trust in state institutions of different levels and charismatic trust, which reflects personalized support for political leaders (in particular, the President and the Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces of Ukraine). Such a distinction is consistent with the empirical results of Guglielmin et al. [30], Hetherington and Rudolph [2], as well as with Ukrainian studies by Panok et al. [21]. The research focuses on trust as a war-stabilizing element which emerges from these studies.

Justice serves as the fundamental standard which determines how political systems should gain their right to exist. The identification of three types of justice – procedural, interpersonal and informational – as a single factor indicates that the assessment of the "honesty" of the authorities at the level of norms, interaction and communication is deeply integrated in the mass consciousness. The research findings match perfectly with the procedural justice theory which Tyler and Lind [1] and Palahnyuk [31] developed. The research by Hetherington and Rudolph [2] shows that people develop institutional trust after they experience justice first. The research by Ceka and Magalhães [17] demonstrates that people base their government trust on perceived justice during times of democratic instability.

The component of social identity and cohesion as the socio-affective basis of loyalty is of particular importance in our model. Empirical evidence shows that a sense of belonging to a national and local community, maintaining informal ties, cohesion and self-understanding, and satisfaction with membership in a social group are the strongest predictors of a positive image of the government. These results confirm the provisions of the social identity theory [13], the findings of Bar-Tal and Halperin [3], as well as the provisions of contemporary Ukrainian researchers [5, 7], who emphasize that identity and cohesion form the basis of social resilience in the face of external threats.

The moral and ethical sensitivity to injustice, a new concept in the model, is interpreted as the ethical core of the psychological image of power. According to the findings, personal experience of unfair treatment and observation of moral inconsistency in the actions of the state reduce trust even with formal support from leaders. According to Golovakha and Makeiev [27], moral legitimacy is no less important than legal legitimacy, as it provides long-term support even in the face of severe social conflict, and collective traumatic experience significantly affects the assessment of the moral legitimacy of the authorities.

The fifth component – the value and ideological framework – includes political and moral dispositions of citizens (mental filters of interpretation), including religiosity, socialist or liberal orientations, permissiveness, etc. As in the works of Hofstede [32], they form a "cultural code" of perception of power. The Ukrainian situation depends on how much media shapes public opinion and what stories people believe and how actively citizens question information. The correlation analysis produced results which showed both intricate and contradictory relationships between fundamental beliefs and how people view justice and their level of trust in the system. The interdisciplinary method to study power as a symbolic image produces these complex results.

Thus, the model of the psychological image of power demonstrates:

The framework consists of multiple interconnected elements which unite cognitive functions with emotional responses and moral principles and personal values.

- factor clarity at the level of empirical indicators (53.99% of total variance);
- social fit, as all components of the model show strong links to social identity, emotional response, civic participation, and moral responsibility;
- The research shows how three elements which operate at institutional levels and personal and ideological levels affect power perception in local and central institutions.

The psychological image of power during wartime exists as an intricate psychosocial structure which fulfills three essential roles by assessing moral conduct and validating social systems and uniting the nation. The research model contains essential elements which enable scientists to study how people behave in civic activities and how political movements develop and how societies remain stable during times of crisis state construction.

Despite the breadth of the empirical base (N = 1128), the study has a number of limitations:

1. *Regression heterogeneity* by region. Not all macro-regions were represented equally, which potentially affects the external validity of the results.
2. *The use of reverse scales*, which requires high interpretive care. Even with careful checking of the direction of the relationship, there is still a possibility of cognitive distortion of the answer.
3. *Political context*. In times of war, respondents' answers may be emotionally or politically colored, which affects the sincerity of answers (social desirability).
4. *A simultaneous cross-section*. The study is cross-sectional, which does not allow us to establish the causality of the identified relationships. A longitudinal approach to studying the transformation of the image of power in dynamics is promising.

Final considerations

The empirical study made it possible to verify the psychological image of power as a multidimensional and polysemantic construct that is formed in the context of war. The research applied factor analysis with correlation methods to discover six vital modules which reveal the organizational structure of this category. Power exists beyond political and administrative views because society bases its understanding of power through its cognitive abilities and emotional responses and moral values and identification processes.

The research established that trust exists in two distinct forms which include institutional trust toward local government institutions based on operational efficiency and daily interactions and personal trust toward national leaders who serve as symbols of mobilization. The polycentric model of legitimacy demonstrates how public awareness handles threats because its adaptable framework enables it to handle threats successfully. The results largely confirmed the expectations of the importance of the local level of government in the perception of citizens, which is in line with the concept of decentralized trust. The research findings show that people trust institutions differently than they do individual leaders which demonstrates separate methods institutions use to gain legitimacy during times of war.

The justice components (procedural, interpersonal, informational) which were integrated into the complete structure of power image proved that the normative-evaluative module functions as the primary system which performs critical legitimization. People who feel injustice strongly will lose their faith in institutions which fail to show transparency and maintain equal treatment. The psychological acceptance of power depends on social identity and emotional involvement and social environment interaction which become more crucial during crisis situations.

Thus, the novelty of the study is the revealed integration of three dimensions – cognitive, emotional and social, and normative-evaluative (value) – in the study of the image of power, as well as in the differentiation of institutional trust by the levels of its manifestation (local/national).

The practical significance lies in the possibility of applying the results to: *building effective communication strategies and analyzing the public legitimization of power* in crisis conditions, taking into account the moral expectations of citizens; *improving public policy aimed at strengthening horizontal solidarity; developing social cohesion programs*, especially in the post-war recovery of society; *psychological support for crisis management*, taking into account the emotional state, group identity and moral anxiety of citizens.

Among the limitations of the study are the uneven regional distribution of the sample, which may affect the representativeness of some indicators; the possible effect of social desirability, especially in responses related to the government in times of war; the contextual nature of the assessment, which is due to the specifics of the period of military conflict – therefore, the results need to be re-evaluated in the post-crisis period.

Further research should focus on the dynamics of the psychological image of power in transitional periods (from war to peace), as well as on a comparative analysis of the image of power in different social groups, including young people, veterans, internally displaced persons, and residents of frontline areas; and an in-depth study of the moral mechanisms that regulate trust and participation in various forms of political activity. Another promising area is the development of a psychometrically validated instrument to measure the consolidated image of government, taking into account national, regional, and cultural contexts.

Thus, the results obtained indicate the need to understand power not only as a political structure, but also as a psychological phenomenon deeply integrated into the collective consciousness of society, especially in times of war and threats to national security, and open up new prospects for interdisciplinary research in the fields of political psychology, sociology, public administration and national security.

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