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# Improvement of Physical Culture and Sports in Rural Communities during War and Post-War Recovery

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### ABSTRACT

During the war, the most damaged area in rural territorial communities was the area of physical culture and sports. Limited human and financial resources created problems for their sustainable functioning. The goal of the study is to substantiate ways to improve the state of physical culture and sports in rural united territorial communities during the war and post-war recovery. The method of collecting empirical material is an expert survey using questionnaires. The survey results indicate that the war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the sphere of physical culture and sports in the United territorial communities, as well as on the social sphere in general. Even though most experts acknowledge the impact of the war on the sphere of physical culture and sports, the majority of respondents believe that the United Territorial Community leadership continues to pay sufficient attention to the social sphere. However, there is a reduction in funding for this sphere during the war, which may create additional challenges. It has been determined that the sphere of physical culture and sports in the united territorial communities requires active attention from both state and local governments. The deterioration of the situation, caused by both objective and subjective factors, requires a comprehensive and in-depth approach to solving the problem.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Part 2 of Article 9 of the Law of Ukraine "On the Legal Regime of Martial Law" [1], local government bodies (LGB) have the powers granted to them by the Constitution of Ukraine and other laws of Ukraine. The military command together with the executive power and the LGB implement measures necessary to ensure the defense, protection, and safety of the population and their interests, as well as the interests of the country. It is important to note that, despite the martial law, most of the reforms that had already been initiated continued in the direction of ensuring the European integration of Ukraine. This concerns territorial reform and local self-government. Their main content is the decentralization of power and the formation of wealthy united territorial communities (UTC), as well as the creation of prerequisites for their self-sufficient and

economically efficient development. A territorial community is a group of residents united by living together within a village, town, or city, which are independent administrative-territorial units, or a voluntary association of residents of several villages that have one administrative center [2-4].

The constitutional provision that the people are the source of state power provides for two forms of implementation - directly by the person and through public authorities (state and self-governing) formed by community residents. According to Art. 140 of the Constitution of Ukraine, local self-government is ensured by the right of a territorial community to resolve issues of local importance within the Constitution and Laws of Ukraine [4].

In addition, in the territories where, after the start of the large-scale war of Russia (RF) against Ukraine, martial law was introduced, and the

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President of Ukraine created temporary bodies – military administrations (MA).

MA are created in one or several populated areas (villages, towns, cities). In this village, town, and city councils do not exercise the powers designated by the Constitution and Laws, including through self-removal from the execution of powers or their actual non-execution or termination of their powers in accordance with the Law [1].

An important component of the social life of rural communities is the sphere of physical culture and sports [5, 6]. In addition to providing physical education for children and youth, and developing sports at the local level, an urgent task is to prepare persons of draft age for military service and defense of the Motherland. Specialists have studied general issues of developing physical culture and sports at the local level [7, 8], developing physical culture and sports in community conditions using the standard for managing the quality of physical culture and sports services [9, 10, 11].

During 2022-2024, important experience was gained, and opportunities for improving the development of physical culture and sports in communities after the start of the war between Russia and Ukraine were identified [12-14]. Bondarets focused on the implementation of state policy in the field of physical culture and sports under the legal regime of martial law [15]. Other authors considered the prospects for improving the state of physical culture and sports in communities during the war and post-war recovery [13].

The goal of the study is to substantiate ways to improve the state of physical culture and sports in rural united territorial communities during the war and post-war recovery.

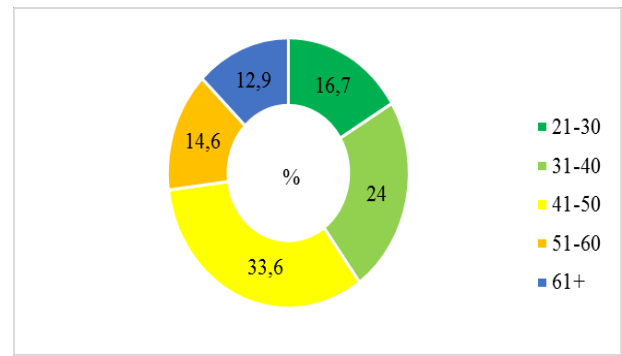
## 2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

### 2.1. Methods.

The method of collecting empirical material is an expert survey using questionnaires.

### 2.2. General information about the respondents

The main contingent consists of willing participants aged between 41 to 50 years, which was 28.6% of the total. 19% were respondents aged between 31 to 40 years. 16.7% were willing participants aged between 21 to 30 years. 14.3% were respondents aged between 51 to 60 years, and 11.9% were respondents aged between 61 years and older (Fig. 1). According to the gender grouping of the participants, the majority of them were women - 52.4% and 47.6% were men.



**Figure 1** Distribution of respondents by age groups.

According to their work experience as specialists in physical education and sports, the participants were distributed as follows: 50% have work experience of up to 5 years, 21.4% of respondents have experience of 6 to 10 years. 11.9% have work experience from 11 to 15 years, and 9.5% have work experience from 16 to 20 years, respectively. Only 2.4% of respondents have work experience from 21 to 30 years, and 4.8% of experts have been working in this field for over 31 years.

### 2.3. Research organization

The research was conducted in the Dnipro region of Ukraine in the period 2022-2024. The expert group consisted of 42 specialists from the All-Ukrainian Physical Culture and Sports Society "Kolos".

### 2.4. Statistical analysis

To process the empirical information collected during the survey, a specialized statistical software SPSS for Windows 22.0 was used.

## 3. RESULTS

First of all, it is important to analyze the state of local community budgets after February 24, 2022, which largely determine the sphere of physical culture and sports. It is the availability of finances that allows local authorities to exercise their powers and support sports. After all, it is at the local level, both in peacetime and during the war, that it is necessary to comprehensively solve humanitarian, communal, logistical, and migration problems, and restore what was destroyed, which requires funding [2, 17].

A survey conducted by scientists in May 2022 in Ukrainian communities allowed them to analyze the budget situation they found themselves in during the first months of the war. It was found that every fourth community located in the zone of Russian invasion collected at least 50% less revenue from pre-war plans drawn up for 2022.

Among the united territorial communities outside the combat zone, about two-thirds of them noted a drop in planned revenue by that time.

Collections of personal income tax, excise tax, and land tax were the most affected items (Table 1) [18].

**Table 1.** Profits of territorial communities as of May 2022

How much did the budget revenues decrease about the expected indicators?	LGB outside the combat zone, %	LGB in the combat zone, %	LGB affected by Russian occupation, %
Decreased by 0-9%	23%	12%	13%
Decreased by 0-29%	21%	26%	17%
Decreased by 30-49%	8%	23%	30%
Decreased by 50-69%	3%	20%	22%
Decreased more than 70%	1%	3%	4%
No decreased	43%	15%	13%
Difficult to answer	1%	0%	0%
Decreased by 0-9%	23%	12%	13%

How did the communities cope with the budget crisis? According to the law, local authorities have significantly less access to borrowed resources. International loans and grants are attracted mainly for infrastructure or public projects, and there is no legislative permission to attract them for the category of rural communities. Therefore, local communities had to resort to other mechanisms. The first is a reduction in expenses, and the second is a request from the community to the central or regional authorities for direct financial assistance. 51% of the surveyed communities had to accept a reduction in their budget in the conditions of war.

Most often, this concerned expenses on education, housing, communal services, physical education, and sports. Many of the communities also had to reduce their expenses on wages [18]. In most areas (education, medicine, housing and communal services, culture, physical education and sports), their underfunding means a deterioration in the quality of public services, which they sought to improve. The best economic indicators of the united territorial communities also indicate higher stability of these communities. The share of own revenues in the total volume of society's income positively correlates with the society's readiness for war shocks. We emphasize that it is not the indicator of the volume of own revenues per capita, but the lowest dependence of society on subventions and grants from higher-level budgets that has a positive effect on the readiness for multidimensional shocks.

The indicator reflects the ability of the united territorial community to mobilize financial resources from various local taxes, fees, and other sources, which makes it fiscally self-sufficient, and therefore an autonomous and effective subject of the entire budget system [18]. In addition, communities with a larger population, especially

urban settlements, and their population, tend to have better indicators of readiness. This may be explained by the fact that before the invasion, urban communities already had greater human and financial capabilities than rural united territorial communities to attract and improve existing resources and anticipate potential shocks, prepare for them, and ensure sustainable functioning [18].

Therefore, despite the fact that the decentralization reform emphasizes the need to develop the capacity of communities, rural united territorial communities still have a lower overall capacity to generate income than urban ones. Therefore, on average, the share of own income in urban communities is 7% higher than in rural ones. In addition, there are 109 territorial communities within 30 km of the Russian and Belarusian border, 81 of which are rural and settlement ones. Each of the components of resilience (preparedness, reliability, adaptability) is more critical for them than for others. Therefore, special and best practices of crisis preparation should be disseminated among these communities, and "resilience belts" should be created that would ensure greater safety for the local population.

"Grassroots cooperation" is especially important in extreme conditions. Horizontal interaction works better than instructions from the regional and central levels, ensuring rapid response and adaptation. Therefore, recovery initiatives in the "society-to-community" format, community participation in associations, opportunities for joint submission and implementation of projects within the framework of cooperation agreements, and other forms of interaction and exchange between communities are so important. The importance of the process of community cooperation should be taken into account by donors in the process of project creation and subsequent state policy, encouraging community cooperation [18]. In

addition, cooperation agreements with other united territorial communities have a positive impact on all three dimensions: resilience/readiness, adaptation, and reliability. If local governments signed agreements before a full-scale war, they received the necessary and reliable horizontal connections to exchange important resources, experiences, and best practices in the first weeks, months, and at the time of the survey. Only 20% of united territorial communities received direct financial support during the war. However, only half of them received cash. The state budget deficit and the priority of defense do not allow for an increase in funding for local needs.

We also investigated the state of the local budget after the military tax on the income of individuals was transferred to the state budget. Against January-April 2023 income from the general fund (without transfers) in 2024 increased by 27% (+ UAH 29.2 billion). This is taking into account the transfer of the military tax on the income of individuals. If you count the military tax, which three quarters of 2023 was paid into local budgets, such revenues decreased by 2.7% (by UAH 3.8 billion) [17].

Perhaps, the transfer of the military tax of individuals from local budgets to the state budget (which was a forced step to support the security and defense sector) had a significant impact on local budgets. Therefore, the focus of attention should be on communities in the frontline regions, which have lost a lot in relative terms. These losses are partially compensated by an additional subsidy to the affected regional budgets and LGB. In general, the financial condition of local budgets in most parts of Ukraine remains quite stable [17]. Nevertheless, the management of LGB should increase external financing also [19]. Ukrainian authorities talk about grants and loans from international partners as the main way to cover the state budget deficit. In this direction, it is necessary to work both at the local level and in the LGB. Some municipalities of Ukraine already have the practice of cooperation with foreign municipalities (51% of municipalities turned to them and received help). Horizontal connections at the local level are very important. Similarly, they should be built with the governments of foreign governments and organizations in the field of sports. This requires cooperation and assistance from the Ukrainian regional and central authorities and training of local self-government [20, 21].

The Draft Ukraine Recovery Plan [22] attempts to identify the problems, goals, and results as of 2026 that affect the sphere of physical culture and sports. The problem was recorded as follows. Unbalanced or discontinued work of physical

culture and sports organizations, including youth and reserve sports, which is caused by military actions and forced migration of the population (including children and youth), their destroyed material and technical base.

It is noted that there is no provision of financial and logistical support for the relevant institutions (regardless of the form of ownership) depending on the quantitative and qualitative indicators in the priority areas of activity for the state [22]. Let us consider the features of the post-war resumption of the activities of existing organizations and the opening of new physical education and sports institutions, including children's and youth and reserve sports in priority Olympic sports, which are defined in the Draft Plan. It talks about the creation of organizational and regulatory conditions for the further development of sports institutions and the provision of financial and logistical support for the relevant institutions depending on their quantitative and qualitative indicators. However, among the possible risks, there is a "lack of appropriate funding" [22].

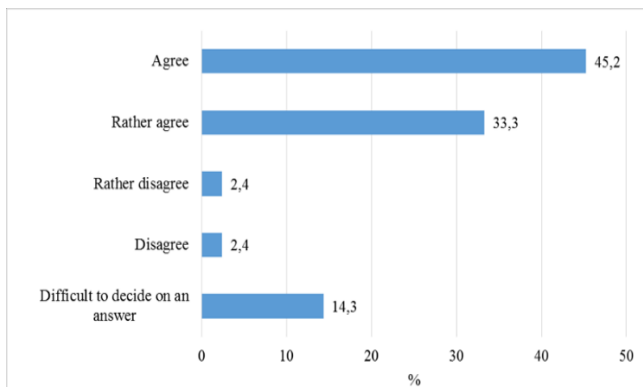
The Draft Plan also presents a measurable indicator of goal achievement. It assesses: "The number of physical education and sports institutions with the appropriate material and technical base for providing high-quality and accessible services to all segments of the population (one institution per 5 thousand people); involvement of up to 12% of children aged between 6-18 years in sports activities in youth sports organizations." But it goes on to note: "The total amount of financial resource requirements for achieving the goal will be determined after December 2025" [22].

In our opinion, certain general guidelines should be supplemented by real research that will allow the development of tactics of action at the local level in different regions. It was precisely to eliminate the gap between the strategy and tactics of action in communities that a study was conducted in rural communities of the Dnipropetrovsk region. Below is the information on the results obtained and the analysis of the responses of experts, namely 42 specialists of the All-Ukrainian Physical Culture and Sports Society "Kolos". The answers to questions regarding ways to improve the state of physical culture and sports in rural United territorial communities in the conditions of 2024 were assessed, taking into account the importance of physical fitness of children, youth, and middle-aged people for the defense of Ukraine.

According to the statement, one of the ways to improve the state of physical culture and sports in the united territorial communities is the adoption of



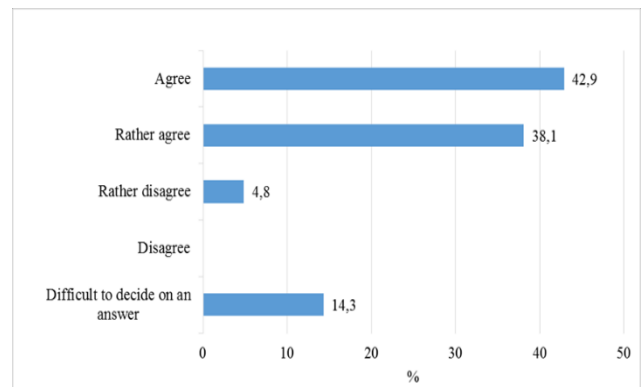
legislative acts by the state on the need to develop physical culture and sports in the context of military operations and confrontation with Russia, we have the following data (Fig. 2). From the graph, we see that 45.2% of respondents completely agree with this statement, and 33.3% tend to agree, which together amounts to 78.5%. 2.4% of respondents expressed that they rather disagree or completely disagree with the statements. At the same time, 14.3% of respondents found it difficult to provide a



**Figure 2.** Experts' responses on the need to adopt legislative acts on the development of physical culture in wartime conditions

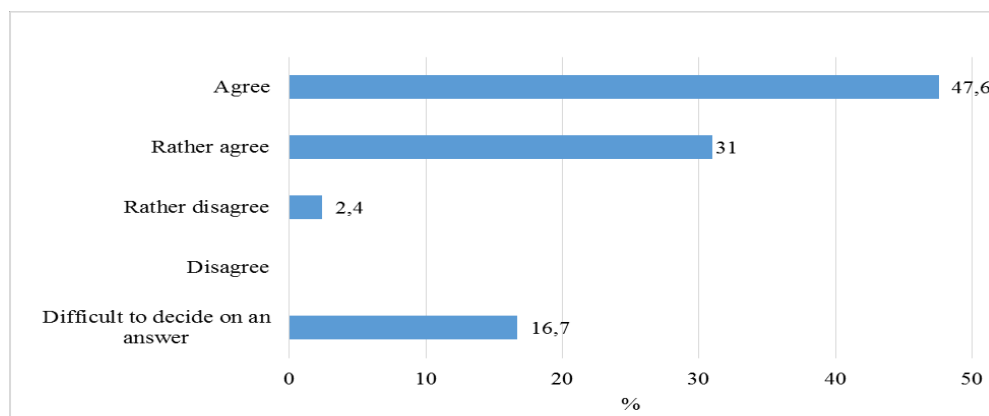
The high level of support for this approach (78.5% in total) shows its importance in ensuring stability and further development of the physical culture and sports sphere during the war. Thus, the adoption of legislative acts aimed at developing physical culture and sports in the context of war is an important and supported step that can significantly improve the state of this sphere in the United Territorial Communities (UTC).

specific answer. The overall data show that most experts recognize the importance of the state adopting legislative acts to support and develop physical culture and sports in the United Territorial communities in the context of military operations. The overall data show that most experts recognize the importance of the state adopting legislative acts to support and develop physical culture and sports in the United Territorial communities in the context of military operations.



**Figure 3.** Experts' responses on the need for regional leadership to pay attention to the development of physical culture in military conditions.

In fig. 3 shows data related to the statement that one of the ways to improve the state of physical culture and sports in individual united territorial communities is to pay more attention to the development of physical culture and sports in the context of military operations and the subsequent confrontation with Russia.



**Figure 4.** Experts' answers on the need to attract the attention of famous Ukrainian athletes to the development of physical culture in combat conditions

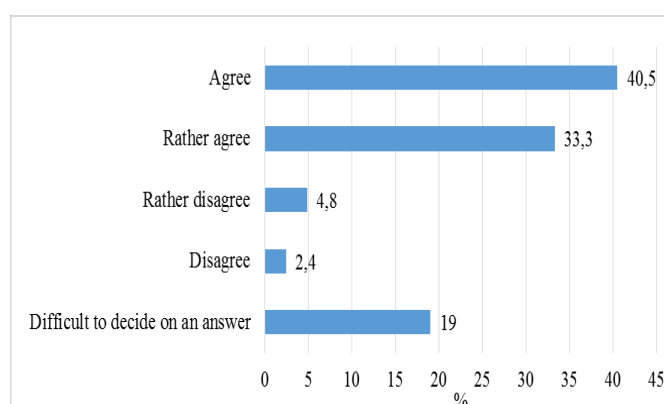
The next question of the study (Fig. 4) concerned the statement that one of the ways to improve the state of physical culture and sports in rural amalgamated territorial communities is to draw the attention of famous Ukrainian athletes to

the need to develop physical culture and sports in the context of military action and confrontation with Russia. Having assessed the results, we can say that the majority of respondents agree with this statement – 47.6% and 31%, respectively, rather

than agree with this (a total of 78.6%). 2.4% of respondents disagreed and 16.7% found it difficult to give an exact answer.

Thus, the majority of respondents support the involvement of famous Ukrainian athletes in the process of developing physical culture and sports in amalgamated territorial communities in the context of military action. This emphasizes the importance of using the authority of athletes to draw attention to the problems of this area and its further development in rural areas. Such an initiative can receive significant support and can become an important factor in maintaining and developing physical activity among the population.

In the third question, we found ways to improve the state of physical culture in OTG by



**Figure 5.** Distribution of responses from experts on the issue of attracting the attention of the military to the development of physical culture

The fifth question was about the need to include information on the state of physical culture and sports in the reporting indicators of the activities of the united territorial communities, by which the success of their work is assessed (Fig. 6). Here, the opinions of the experts were divided in half: about 59.6% supported the introduction of information on the state of physical culture in the reporting results (28.6% of respondents agree and 31% rather agree). However, 26.2% did not support this need (11.9% of respondents disagreed and 14.3% of respondents rather disagreed with the statement), while 11.9% of respondents could not give an exact answer.

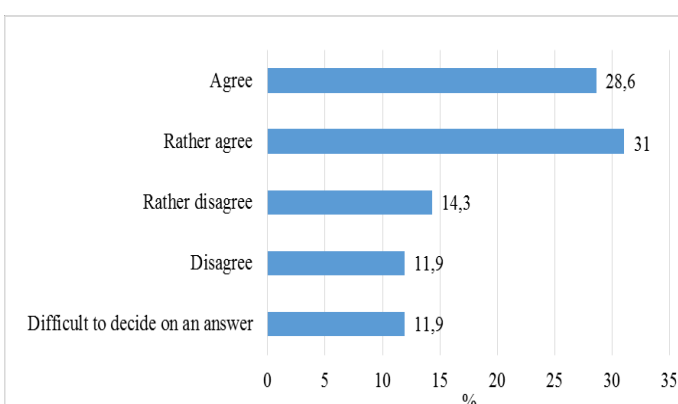
#### 4. DISCUSSION

Based on the conducted experimental and expert study and the data obtained during the analysis, we offer the following recommendations:

Develop and implement targeted programs for the development of physical culture and sports. Develop comprehensive programs for the

drawing the attention of the military, who recognize their residents (Fig. 5). The data show that the majority (73.8%) support the involvement of the military in separate OTGs for the development of physical culture and sports in the conditions of military operations. This emphasizes the importance of involving the military in supporting this area. 19% of experts found it difficult to provide an accurate answer.

The fifth question was about the need to include information on the state of physical culture and sports in the performance indicators of the united territorial communities, which are used to assess the success of their work (Fig. 6).



**Figure 6** Distribution of respondents' answers about the need to include information on the state of physical culture and sports in the main reporting indicators of the activities of the UTC

development of physical culture and sports in individual amalgamated territorial communities, taking into account the specifics of wartime conditions. Such programs may include ensuring adequate funding (including support for sports infrastructure, purchasing equipment, and financing sports events, restoring and developing sports facilities, including in those communities where they have been destroyed or declined due to military action, actively involving the population in participating in sports events, organizing mass sports activities, which will help increase the level of physical activity among residents of united territorial communities [23-28].

Involvement of famous athletes and public figures in the promotion of physical culture and sports. Use the authority and influence of famous athletes to popularize physical culture and sports - involve famous athletes in national and regional campaigns aimed at supporting sports. In particular, it is allowed to appoint athletes as ambassadors of various physical culture events,

which will help draw attention to this area and motivate the population to an active lifestyle.

Increased attention of regional and district leaders to the development of physical culture and sports. Activate the role of local authorities in supporting physical culture and sports, including indicators of physical culture and sports development in the reporting of the united territorial communities, which will allow the management to objectively assess the effectiveness of work in this area.

Partnership initiatives: create partnerships between local authorities, sports organizations, and public initiatives to jointly solve problems and develop sports in the united territorial communities. It is recommended to conduct a detailed analysis of the financial resources available for physical education and sports, as well as the general social sphere. Priority should be given to programs that directly contribute to the preservation and improvement of the physical and mental health of the population. Opportunities for optimizing costs in the field of physical education and sports should be considered. This may include the use of existing infrastructure, involving volunteers, and partnerships with local businesses, and public organizations to implement sports programs [19, 29].

It is recommended to create reserve funds to support social programs in crisis situations. Such funds can ensure financial stability and continuation of important initiatives even in conditions of limited budget.

Attracting alternative sources of funding. Grants and international aid: UTC should actively seek and attract grants from international organizations, as well as other forms of international aid to support physical education and sports. This will help reduce the burden on local budgets and ensure sustainable development in this area.

The development of public-private partnerships can become a key source of additional funding. For example, local businesses can sponsor sports events, equip venues, or support other social initiatives. Also, the use of crowdfunding platforms to raise funds for specific sports or social projects can attract support from the public. This will also help increase the level of involvement of residents in the implementation of these projects.

Introduction of legislative changes in support of physical culture and sports in the conditions of war. To initiate and support the adoption of legislative acts promoting the development of physical culture and sports in wartime conditions. It is also possible to introduce legislative initiatives

providing additional financial incentives for the development of sports infrastructure, support for athletes, and organization of sports events. The development of regulations that will ensure the protection and renewal of sports infrastructure in combat zones or areas of increased danger will be significant.

Support of physical activity and health in war conditions. Physical culture and sports must be integrated into broader social programs aimed at supporting the mental and physical health of the population during the war. This may include rehabilitation programs for victims, support for veterans, and work with children and youth. Our proposals echo the work of many specialists who have shown that the organization of sports events can serve as an effective means of psychological support and rehabilitation [24, 25, 30, 31]. Sports help relieve stress and improve general well-being, which is especially important in wartime conditions.

Thus, we come to the conclusion that to solve problems in the field of physical culture and sports, both legislative and organizational measures must be implemented, as well as active cooperation between the government, the public, and business. All initiatives should be adapted to wartime conditions, taking into account the challenges and opportunities arising in this context. It is important to attract the general Ukrainian public to participate in sports events and initiatives, as this contributes to increasing physical activity and strengthening social cohesion.

## 5. Conclusion

The survey results indicate that the war in Ukraine has had a significant impact on the sphere of physical culture and sports in the United territorial communities, as well as on the social sphere in general. Even though most experts acknowledge the impact of the war on the sphere of physical culture and sports, the majority of respondents believe that the United Territorial Community leadership continues to pay sufficient attention to the social sphere.

However, there is a reduction in funding for this sphere during the war, which may create additional challenges. It has been determined that the sphere of physical culture and sports in the united territorial communities requires active attention from both state and local governments. The deterioration of the situation, caused by both objective and subjective factors, requires a comprehensive and in-depth approach to solving the problem. To achieve a sustainable result, it is important to combine the energy of young specialists with the experience of older ones, as well

as to ensure a balanced approach to the development of this sphere in war conditions.

### Conflict of Interest

No conflict of interest is declared by the authors. In addition, no financial support was received.

### Author Contributions

Conception and design of the study: PV, DN, S; Data collection: PV, DN; Data analysis: DN, SI, YK; Data Interpretation: PV, SI, TN, YK; Drafting the article and/or its critical revision: PV, DN, SI, TN, YK; All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

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