



KYIV SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS

MASTER'S PROGRAM "SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY"

MASTER'S THESIS

**"SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF UKRAINIANS'
ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE INTRODUCTION OF NATIONAL POLICIES ON
WOMEN'S PARTICIPATION IN THE SECURITY SECTOR"**

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For the degree: Master
Specialty: C4 Psychology
Educational Program "Social Psychology"

Kyiv 2026

Подяка

Висловлюю щирю вдячність Київській школі економіки за академічний грант на навчання та за створення середовища, яке сприяє змістовній науковій діяльності.

Також, дякую моїй науковій керівниці, професорці Марії Чайнській, за всеосяжну підтримку на всіх етапах цього дослідження. Її настанови, високі академічні стандарти та незмінна підтримка були безцінними впродовж усієї роботи.

Анотація

Тривала військова агресія росії проти України актуалізувала питання участі жінок у військовій сфері та можливого *впровадження гендерно нейтрального військового обов'язку*. Попри зростання кількості жінок у Збройних силах України, соціально-психологічні чинники підтримки такої політики залишаються недостатньо вивченими. Метою роботи було дослідити психологічні предиктори підтримки гендерно нейтрального військового обов'язку та уявлення громадян про його справедливість. У дослідженні застосовано змішаний дизайн, що поєднав опитування 789 дорослих респондентів із регресійним і медіаційним аналізами та якісний контент-аналіз відкритих відповідей щодо справедливості такої політики. Результати показали, що сприйняття справедливості гендерно нейтрального військового обов'язку є ключовим чинником його підтримки. Вища сприйнята небезпека служби, гендерний есенціалізм і правий авторитаризм знижували підтримку частково через нижче відчуття справедливості. Якість позитивного контакту з жінками-військовослужбовицями мала більшу роль, ніж його частота. Якісний аналіз показав, що прихильники й противники гендерно нейтрального військового обов'язку по-різному розуміють справедливість, однак визнають потребу реформ, спрямованих на покращення умов служби, зменшення сексизму й корупції та забезпечення рівніших можливостей. Отримані результати підкреслюють важливість структурних змін для підтримки гендерної рівності у військовій сфері.

Ключові слова: гендерно нейтральний військовий обов'язок; жінки-військовослужбовиці; сприйнята справедливість; гендерний есенціалізм; правий авторитаризм; позитивний контакт; змішаний дизайн; Україна.

Кількість слів у роботі: 20 750.

Acknowledgements

I express my sincere gratitude to the Kyiv School of Economics for the academic scholarship support and for creating an environment that fosters meaningful academic research.

I would also like to thank my academic supervisor, Professor Maria Chayinska, for their comprehensive guidance and unwavering support throughout every stage of this study. Their advice, high academic standards, and consistent encouragement were invaluable over the course of this work.

Abstract

Russia's prolonged military aggression against Ukraine has intensified discussions about women's participation in the military and the potential *introduction of gender-neutral conscription*. Despite the growing number of women in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the socio-psychological factors underlying support for such a policy remain insufficiently studied. This study aimed to examine the psychological predictors of support for gender-neutral conscription and citizens' perceptions of its fairness. A mixed-methods design was used, combining a survey of 789 adult respondents with regression and mediation analyses, as well as qualitative content analysis of open-ended responses about the fairness of this policy. The results showed that perceived fairness of gender-neutral conscription is a key determinant of support for it. Higher perceived danger of military service, gender essentialism, and right-wing authoritarianism reduced support, partly through lower perceived fairness. The quality of positive contact with women service members played a greater role than the frequency of such contact. Qualitative analysis indicated that supporters and opponents of gender-neutral conscription understand fairness differently; however, both groups acknowledged the need for reforms aimed at improving service conditions, reducing sexism and corruption, and ensuring more equal opportunities. These findings highlight the importance of structural changes for advancing gender equality in the military sphere.

Keywords: gender-neutral conscription; women service members; perceived fairness; gender essentialism; right-wing authoritarianism; positive contact; mixed-methods design; Ukraine.

Word count: 20 750

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Meaning
CI	Confidence interval
CQ	Contact Quantity
CQual	Contact Quality
DPM	Dual-Process Motivational model
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
GE	Gender Essentialism
IDS	Interpersonal Decision Support (support for a close woman's voluntary military service)
JASP	Jeffreys's Amazing Statistics Program
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy
<i>M</i>	Mean
ML	Maximum Likelihood estimation
MS	Modern Sexism
OLS	Ordinary Least Squares regression
OSF	Open Science Framework
PD	Perceived Danger (of women's military service)
PF	Perceived Fairness (of gender-neutral military duty)
PS	Policy Support (for gender-neutral military duty)
QCA	Qualitative Content Analysis
RWA	Right-Wing Authoritarianism
<i>SD</i>	Standard Deviation
SDO	Social Dominance Orientation

<i>SE</i>	Standard Error
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
UN	United Nations
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor
VSA-6	Very Short Authoritarianism Scale (6-item)

INTRODUCTION

0.1. Research Problem and Motivation

Russia's war against Ukraine has been ongoing since 2014 and escalated into a full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022. This prolonged high-threat environment has intensified public debate about gender equality and the fair distribution of civic obligations in national defence. This thesis examines one specific dimension of that debate, namely public attitudes toward the potential introduction of a **gender-neutral military duty policy**. Throughout this thesis, this term refers to a reform model in which the same legal obligations of military duty apply to women and men, with gender-based exemptions reduced or removed.

Women's participation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine is already substantial. As of 1 January 2025, more than 70,000 women serve in the Armed Forces, and more than 5,500 are deployed directly on the front line (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2025). This context matters analytically, because citizens who form opinions about equal military duty do so against the background of an already visible reality that women are serving, including in combat conditions. Internationally, however, women's integration into military service has remained uneven, with persistent gender inequalities documented across armed forces (Reis & Menezes, 2020). Research with women serving in the National Guard of Ukraine further shows that self-fulfillment and socio-economic stability are the primary motivators for choosing military service among women (Prykhodko et al., 2020). Unit commanders rated the professional effectiveness of female personnel positively across key performance indicators, suggesting that military service is no less doable or meaningful for women than it is for men. Yet the normative question of equal obligation remains politically and legally open. Whether military duty should be formally equalized is a distinct question from whether women's voluntary service is acceptable, and one that citizens may answer very differently.

Despite the policy salience of this issue, systematic evidence on its socio-psychological determinants is lacking. It remains unclear how ideological orientations, gender-related beliefs, intergroup contact, and risk perceptions shape support for or resistance to gender-neutral military duty. Equally unclear is whether these associations operate through a legitimacy-related mechanism, specifically, perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty. This study addresses both questions.

0.2. Policy Context

Policy proposals to extend military duty to women raise distinct questions about civic obligation, risk, and fairness. Comparative evidence shows these questions are not resolved by normative arguments or security necessity alone. Latvia debated extending conscription to women after 2022. The reform met strong resistance, both practical and value-based, even under an acute security threat (Banka & Zalāns, 2025). Societal acceptance of such reforms depends on broad legitimation, not on elite advocacy alone. Israel shows a related pattern. Military service is legally equal for women and men, yet social acceptance and integration within the army remain incomplete, held back by persistent gender norms and stereotypes (Sarnavskyi, 2025). Together, these cases show that legal reform and social acceptance are analytically separable.

At the international level, UN Security Council Resolution 1325 established the normative framework linking women's participation to peace and security governance (United Nations Security Council [UNSC], 2000). It affirms that women's role in security is a legitimate policy issue, but it does not prescribe any specific form of civic obligation. The question of what equal duty should look like in a given national context remains open and context-dependent.

A socio-psychological approach is therefore analytically necessary. It addresses a question that legal and institutional analyses cannot answer, namely why some citizens support gender-neutral military duty while others resist it. Attitudes toward contested policy reforms are shaped not only by policy arguments but by ideological orientations, gender-related beliefs, risk perceptions, and interpersonal experience. Explaining and predicting these attitudes requires a dedicated psychological framework.

0.3. Aim and Methods

Aim. This study aims to identify the socio-psychological predictors of Ukrainians' attitudes toward the introduction of a gender-neutral military duty policy, to test whether the perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty functions as a key legitimacy-related mechanism linking broader beliefs to policy support, and to examine how Ukrainian respondents construe fairness in their own words.

Research objectives.

1. To assess associations between right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), social dominance orientation (SDO), modern sexism, gender essentialism, perceived

danger, and contact with women service members and support for gender-neutral military duty policy.

2. To test whether the perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty mediates the relationships between ideological and gender-related beliefs and policy support.
3. To assess a secondary behavioural outcome: supportive versus discouraging interpersonal reactions toward a close woman who chooses to serve voluntarily (Interpersonal Decision Support).
4. To examine how Ukrainian respondents conceptualise fairness in this domain, we systematically coded open-ended responses to a question about what a "fair approach" to compulsory military duty would mean.

Methods. This study uses an **explanatory sequential mixed-methods design** (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). The quantitative strand consists of an online survey of Ukrainian adults aged 18 and above, analysed using reliability analysis (Cronbach's α), descriptive statistics, bivariate correlations, hierarchical OLS regression, and bootstrapped mediation analysis. The qualitative strand consists of systematic content analysis of open-ended responses to one fairness-related question (Q49), using a deductive-inductive coding framework developed for this study. The two strands are integrated through a joint display approach (Guetterman, Fetters, & Creswell, 2015) that links emergent fairness construals to policy-support quartiles. The combined design follows the principle that quantitative results identify what predicts policy attitudes, while qualitative analysis clarifies how respondents themselves understand the central evaluative construct.

Research design rationale. A purely quantitative design tests pre-specified hypotheses but cannot reveal how respondents themselves construe the key evaluative dimension. A purely qualitative design captures rich meaning but cannot quantify relative predictive contributions. The sequential mixed-methods design combines both strengths: the quantitative model establishes that perceived fairness is the central mediator (H5a), and the qualitative analysis then illuminates what fairness means to respondents – clarifying through what conceptual content this mediator carries its effect.

0.4. Research Questions

Main question: What socio-psychological factors predict Ukrainians' support for or resistance to gender-neutral military duty policy, and what role does perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty play in these attitudes?

Sub-questions:

1. How are RWA, SDO, modern sexism, gender essentialism, perceived danger, and contact with women service members associated with policy support or resistance for gender-neutral military duty?
2. Does the perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty mediate the relationships between ideological and gender-related beliefs and policy support?
3. How do respondents themselves construe a fair approach to gender-neutral military duty?
4. How are the same predictors associated with Interpersonal Decision Support toward a close woman who chooses to serve voluntarily?

0.5. Expected Findings

The study expects ideological conservatism, gender-traditional beliefs, and perceived danger of women's service to be associated with lower support for gender-neutral military duty, and more frequent, higher-quality contact with women service members with greater support. Perceived fairness is expected to be the key mediating mechanism linking these beliefs to policy attitudes.

0.6. Contribution

Theoretical contribution. This study tests an integrated predictive model of policy support for gender-neutral military duty. Perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty is positioned as the key legitimacy-related mechanism linking ideological orientations, gender-related beliefs, contact, and perceived danger to policy attitudes. It extends the dual-process motivational model (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010) to a defence policy domain under wartime conditions. It applies intergroup contact theory (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006) to a military context where contact with women service members has become substantially more common. It also applies foundational risk perception research (Slovic, 1987) to the evaluation of women's exposure to military danger.

Practical contribution. Attitudes toward gender-neutral military duty are likely to shape the social feasibility of future reforms in Ukraine, where women's participation is substantial and policy debate is ongoing (Ministry of Defence of Ukraine, 2025). Comparative evidence confirms that such reforms remain politically fragile without societal buy-in (Banka & Zalāns, 2025). The findings may inform policy design and public communication. Specifically, they clarify whether resistance is more strongly associated with fairness judgments, danger perceptions, or ideological orientations.

0.7. Thesis Structure

This thesis consists of an Introduction, three chapters, Conclusions and Recommendations, a Reference list, and Appendices. The Introduction presents the research problem, policy context, aim, research questions, and contribution. Chapter 1 develops the theoretical background, defines all key constructs, and derives the formal hypotheses. Chapter 2 describes the empirical study and reports the results. Chapter 3 interprets the findings, outlines limitations, and provides practical recommendations. The Appendices include the bilingual survey instrument, informed consent materials, debriefing text, and supplementary tables.

CHAPTER 1. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

1.1. Analytical Focus and Scope of the Study

The focus of this study is public attitudes toward a **gender-neutral military duty policy**. That is a reform under which the same legal obligations of compulsory military service would apply to women and men, with gender-based exemptions reduced or removed. This framing is deliberately narrow. Existing research has documented substantial public resistance to extending mandatory service to women even where women's voluntary service is broadly accepted (Banka & Zalāns, 2025; Loukou, 2020). In other words, citizens often welcome women's personal choice to serve while still opposing the idea of making service mandatory. The two questions are normatively distinct; they involve different considerations of fairness, risk, and civic duty. The second question is the one this study addresses.

The study includes two dependent phenomena. The primary outcome is **policy support or resistance** toward gender-neutral military duty. The secondary outcome is an **Interpersonal Decision Support** construct: respondents' stated readiness to react supportively or discouragingly toward a close woman who decides to volunteer for military service. Including both outcomes extends the analysis from abstract policy evaluation to personally relevant behavioural dispositions.

1.2. Outcome Variables: Policy Attitudes and Interpersonal Decision Support

1.2.1. Policy Support and Resistance

A policy attitude is an evaluative response toward a defined policy object. It integrates cognitive, affective, and normative components (Ajzen, 1991; Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). The cognitive component includes beliefs about what a policy would achieve. The affective component includes emotional reactions like discomfort or approval. The normative component includes judgements about what is fair or right.

Within this study, policy support refers to positive evaluations of introducing gender-neutral military duty, while policy resistance refers to negative evaluations. Both poles of the dimension are theoretically meaningful, because a person may endorse gender equality in principle yet oppose imposing military risk on women. By treating support and resistance as opposite ends of a single continuum, the study is able to capture this kind of complexity.

Empirical work on public reactions to contested policies points to fairness as a central mediator linking citizens' values to their willingness to accept a given reform. In a study of a policy mandating on-site wastewater reuse in Bengaluru, Kollmann et al. (2024) reported that they "found a very strong association between fairness and policy acceptance" (p. 9). Their analyses further showed that people judge fairness not only through their own outcomes but also through outcomes for other groups, including vulnerable populations and future generations. Fairness, on this evidence, operates as an evaluative filter through which policy support passes.

Gender-specific beliefs can shape how that fairness filter works. Drawing on four studies, Wilton et al. (2019) concluded that "people who view gender as fixed and biologically based are, indeed, less inclined to support social policy designed to protect women and transgender people from structural inequalities" (p. 10). Exposure to anti-essentialist framings of gender reduced this opposition, partly through weaker sexist prejudice. Translated to the present context, essentialist cognitions may act as a cognitive barrier to supporting equal military obligation – one that operates separately from broader ideological orientations such as RWA or SDO.

1.2.2. Interpersonal Decision Support toward Women's Military Participation

The secondary dependent variable captures Interpersonal Decision Support. It is grounded in the reasoned action framework (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Within this framework, intentions are the closest predictor of actual behaviour. They are shaped by attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived control.

Attitudes toward a general policy and intentions toward specific behaviour can diverge. A person may abstractly support equal duty while privately discouraging a close woman from serving. These represent analytically separable phenomena that may rest on different psychological processes.

This distinction adds ecological validity. In wartime Ukraine, women's military service is not a purely theoretical matter. Many citizens encounter it in personal relationships. Whether someone would support or discourage a close woman's decision to serve reflects how gender attitudes work at the interpersonal level. This is a dimension that policy surveys cannot easily capture.

Perceived risk also enters this framework. Cui et al. (2022) extended the reasoned action model to public participation in smart city development and found that perceived risk reduced participation intentions both directly and through attitudes and subjective norms. In a different domain, Savadori and Lauriola (2021) studied risk perception during the rise of the COVID-19 epidemic in Italy. Their findings "confirmed the

empirical distinction between affective and analytical risk perceptions" (p. 17), with emotional reactions and likelihood judgements predicting different protective behaviours. Both studies suggest that how people intend to act may depend on how they feel about risk, not only how they evaluate it cognitively.

1.2.3. Ambivalence and Normative Conflict

Attitudes toward gender-neutral military duty are likely to involve normative conflict, because citizens must reconcile competing values. Gender equality and equal civic obligation stand on one side; gendered norms of protection and unequal risk exposure stand on the other. The resulting tension can generate ambivalence, simultaneously positive and negative evaluations of the same policy object.

Stachowitsch and Strand (2024) describe compulsory military service as being "in constant tension with liberal democracy, which foregrounds individual freedoms and rights and, in principle, prohibits excessive obligations to the state" (p. 472). Extending that obligation equally to women intensifies the tension, forcing a reckoning between two deeply held values: a commitment to gender equality on one hand, and the protection of women from state-imposed risk on the other.

Ambivalence matters here for at least two reasons. It predicts attitude instability, and it can also weaken the relationship between ideology and policy position, because competing values pull the person in opposite directions. The present study does not directly measure ambivalence, but it is worth flagging as a relevant backdrop for interpreting the findings.

1.3. Ideological Orientations and Gender-Related Beliefs

1.3.1. Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance Orientation

Right-wing authoritarianism (RWA) is defined by three correlated tendencies: submission to established authorities, endorsement of punitive norm enforcement, and adherence to conventional values (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2018). Within the dual-process motivational model (DPM), RWA is rooted in a dangerous world belief, the perception that the social environment is threatening and requires order and control (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). This perception motivates preferences for strong authority, social cohesion, and conventional norms. People high in RWA tend to resist changes that disrupt established social arrangements, because such changes threaten the order they value.

Social dominance orientation (SDO) measures preferences for group-based hierarchy and inequality (Pratto et al., 1994; Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). People high in

SDO believe some groups should dominate others, and oppose policies that promote equality. Within the DPM, SDO is rooted in a competitive jungle worldview, the perception that intergroup relations are inherently zero-sum (Duckitt & Sibley, 2010). The SDO7 scale distinguishes two sub-dimensions: dominance (active preference for group superiority) and anti-egalitarianism (opposition to equality-promoting policies; Ho et al., 2015).

Although RWA and SDO are moderately correlated, they capture distinct psychological motivations. Canto et al. (2021) summarised this distinction well: "RWA is sensitive to groups that challenge and threaten the social order, and SDO is sensitive to groups that challenge intergroup hierarchical relations" (p. 13). In their study of attributions of blame in acquaintance rape scenarios, participants high in RWA or SDO assigned greater blame to the victim, and those high in both assigned the most. This pattern suggests that the two orientations reinforce each other when targets are seen as violating both conventional norms and the existing gender hierarchy.

Austin and Jackson (2019) provided further evidence that RWA and SDO operate through different sexism pathways. They reported that "both RWA and SDO independently predicted both sexism variables" (p. 36), with benevolent sexism most strongly predicted by traditionalism (an RWA facet) and dominance (an SDO facet), while hostile sexism was predicted by conservatism and anti-egalitarianism. Both constructs are therefore expected to predict resistance to gender-neutral duty, but through different motivational pathways. RWA operates through concerns about social order and conventional gender roles. SDO operates through hierarchy preferences and anti-egalitarian orientations.

1.3.2. Modern Sexism and Gender Essentialism

Modern sexism (MS) is a form of gender prejudice with three elements: denying that discrimination against women is still a problem, opposing women's demands for equal treatment, and resenting policies seen as favouring women (Swim et al., 1995). Unlike overt sexism, it presents itself as a fairness concern – the argument that women already have equal opportunities, so further equality measures are unnecessary or even unfair.

Glick and Fiske (2001) argued that modern sexism and traditional, role-based attitudes toward women function as complementary justifications for gender inequality: subjectively positive views of women in traditional roles reinforce opposition to policies that challenge those roles. This is directly relevant here. A person holding modern-sexist

views may see gender-equal military duty in two ways at once: as putting an unfair load on women, and as ignoring real differences between women and men.

Research consistently links modern sexism to opposition to gender equality policies. Off et al. (2022) analysed data from 27 EU countries (N = 32,469) and found that modern sexism, particularly the perception that women's rights threaten men's opportunities, is most prevalent among young men, especially in conditions of economic competition and low institutional trust. Seitova et al. (2023) extended this work in a representative Hungarian sample (N = 1000). They showed that SDO mediated the relationship between conservative political orientation and modern sexism, while cosmopolitan orientation as an egalitarian worldview worked in the opposite direction. This suggests that modern sexism sits at the intersection of political ideology and broader attitudes toward group hierarchy.

Young and Nauta (2013) tested how different forms of sexism predict attitudes toward women in the military specifically. They reported that "old-fashioned, modern, hostile, and benevolent sexism all had negative bivariate associations with attitudes toward women in the military and in combat roles" (p. 170). When multiple forms of sexism were tested together, modern sexism, old-fashioned sexism, and hostile sexism each made unique contributions to predicting attitudes toward women in combat. Sexism also mediated the link between military affiliation and attitudes toward women in combat, suggesting that negative attitudes in military contexts stem largely from underlying sexist beliefs.

Gender essentialism (GE) is the belief that gender differences are natural, fixed, and biologically determined (Skewes et al., 2018). Unlike sexism, which is primarily evaluative, essentialism is primarily cognitive: it concerns beliefs about why men and women are different, not just how they should be treated. People high in GE believe that social gender roles reflect natural biological facts. Equal military duty may therefore seem not merely unfair but unnatural.

Keller (2005) demonstrated the broader consequences of essentialist thinking across three studies. He found that "essentialist beliefs play a central role in processes of motivated social cognition as expressed in stereotyping, prejudice, and sociopolitical attitudes" (p. 698). In his experimental study, making essentialist information salient increased prejudice and ingroup bias, particularly among people with chronic essentialist beliefs. This points to a causal role: when activated, essentialist beliefs can strengthen prejudice, not merely accompany it.

Skewes et al. (2018) validated a gender essentialism scale in two nationally representative samples from Denmark and Australia. In both samples, GE independently

predicted opposition to gender role equality and support for gender discrimination, even after controlling for SDO and political orientation. GE also predicted the perceived fairness of gender-based treatment. This finding directly parallels the mediating role of perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty in the present study.

Modern sexism and gender essentialism are empirically correlated but make independent contributions. Both are retained as separate predictors because they represent different psychological pathways: sexism reflects evaluative antagonism toward women's equal claims; essentialism reflects cognitive beliefs about the naturalness of gender differences.

1.4. Intergroup Contact with Women Service Members

1.4.1. Quantity and Quality of Contact

Contact with women service members refers to direct personal experience with women who serve or have served in the Ukrainian Armed Forces or other security institutions. Following the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) and its subsequent development, contact is assessed along two dimensions: **quantity (CQ)**, meaning how frequent or extensive the interaction is, and **quality (CQual)**, meaning how meaningful, positive, and respectful the interaction is.

This distinction matters analytically. Frequent contact that is superficial or tense may not reduce negative attitudes toward women's military roles. Contact that meets optimal conditions, such as equal status, cooperation, and institutional support, is more likely to produce meaningful attitude change (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). A longitudinal study of over 1,600 secondary school students across Belgium, England, and Germany provided strong evidence for this hierarchy. Binder et al. (2009) found that quality of contact was a more consistent predictor of reduced prejudice than quantity. In their words, "quality seems to play a more prominent role than quantity because effect sizes were lower for quantity, and these became nonsignificant once quality of contact was controlled" (p. 852). Simply counting interactions underestimates what matters. The nature of these interactions carries most predictive weight.

Prestwich et al. (2008) reached a compatible conclusion through a different route. They examined how contact quantity and quality relate to explicit and implicit attitudes toward Asian outgroup members among White participants. For explicit attitudes, which involve conscious, controllable evaluations comparable to the policy support for the gender-neutral military duty measure in the present study, contact quality was the significant predictor, not quantity. Both effects were mediated by reduced intergroup

anxiety. This convergent evidence from different research traditions supports prioritising contact quality over quantity when predicting deliberate, reportable attitudes such as support for gender-neutral duty.

Binder et al. (2009) also demonstrated that the contact-prejudice relationship is bidirectional. Contact reduces prejudice, but prejudice also reduces contact. Prejudiced individuals avoid meaningful engagement with the outgroup or keep contact superficial, limiting its potential effect. This finding has important methodological implications for cross-sectional research. A correlation between contact quality and policy support for gender-neutral military duty in the present study cannot be interpreted as pure causal evidence of contact shaping attitudes. Pre-existing attitudes toward women's military participation likely shape who seeks contact with women service members and who avoids it.

In the context of Russia's full-scale war against Ukraine, contact with women service members has become substantially more common across Ukrainian society. This makes the contact construct especially relevant. Many civilians now have neighbours, relatives, colleagues, or friends who are serving. The quality of these interpersonal encounters, rather than their sheer frequency, is expected to shape attitudes toward equal military obligation.

1.4.2. Mechanisms of Contact Effects

The contact hypothesis predicts that positive interpersonal interaction reduces prejudice, but the mechanism matters. Pettigrew and Tropp (2008) identified intergroup anxiety, a construct first defined by Stephan and Stephan (1985), as the most consistent mediator. Anticipating rejection, embarrassment, or misunderstanding produces discomfort that sustains avoidance and bias. Repeated positive contact reduces this anxiety, which in turn weakens negative attitudes toward the outgroup.

Evidence from post-conflict contexts shows that this mechanism operates even under extreme polarisation. Telaku (2020) surveyed 441 Albanians and Serbs in post-war Kosovo and confirmed that intergroup anxiety mediates the relationship between contact frequency and willingness to engage culturally with the opposing group. The more members met people from the opposing group, the less anxiety they felt, and the more openness they expressed. This finding is particularly relevant for wartime Ukraine because it shows that contact mechanisms remain functional in societies marked by armed conflict. However, Telaku also found that contact did not change deeply held narratives about the conflict itself, suggesting that anxiety-reduction works on willingness to engage but not automatically on ideological beliefs.

A second mechanism is stereotype disconfirmation. Contact with counter-stereotypical outgroup members, those whose qualities contradict conventional expectations, weakens the cognitive basis of prejudice. Taschler and West (2017) tested this mechanism with 170 men and 280 women and found that more frequent and higher-quality contact with counter-stereotypical women (women in positions of authority or seniority) predicted lower hostile sexism, lower rape myth acceptance, and reduced intention to rape in men. The effect was mediated through hostile sexism rather than benevolent sexism. Applied to the present study, women service members represent a counter-stereotypical category in a domain traditionally coded as masculine. Contact with them should therefore weaken essentialist assumptions about gendered capacity for military service.

Extending this logic to workplace settings, Delgado-Iglesias et al. (2019) studied a sample of 307 Spanish employees and found that having a female boss moderated the relationship between neosexism and negative attitudes toward women leaders. Among women high in neosexism, direct experience with a female leader reduced the belief that women lack the instrumental traits needed for leadership. The pattern supports the disconfirmation mechanism when contact with a concrete counter-stereotypical exemplar weakens abstract prejudiced beliefs. Although the effect was not uniform across conditions, it suggests that the contact-prejudice relationship is sensitive to context and perceiver characteristics.

Not all research reports strong attitudinal shifts through contact with women in leadership roles. A meta-analysis of 99 studies (N over 100,000) by Paustian-Underdahl et al. (2014) found that perceptions of leadership effectiveness by gender depend heavily on context, including time period, organisational type, and rater source. Women were rated as more effective than men in middle management and in other ratings, whereas men rated themselves as more effective in self-ratings. Stereotypes about women in leadership are shifting, on this evidence, but unevenly. Exposure to women leaders alone does not guarantee a uniform reduction in bias.

Earlier findings in military contexts also confirm contact effects. Ivarsson and Berggren (2005) documented that male officers in the Swedish Armed Forces with more frequent contact with female colleagues held less sexist attitudes. Nicol and Mayrand Nicol (2024) reported similar associations in Canadian samples. Finseraas et al. (2016) used an exogenous allocation design in the Norwegian army and found that shared accommodation between men and women reduced some stereotypes among male conscripts, though effects were modest. Hardt and von Hlatky (2025) confirmed that

general population contact with women soldiers correlates with more favourable attitudes toward their deployment.

Three implications follow for the present study. First, contact with women service members is expected to reduce resistance to gender-neutral duty through two converging mechanisms: reduced anxiety about women in military roles, and disconfirmation of essentialist beliefs about female capacity. Second, contact quality matters more than quantity, because only meaningful interaction allows anxiety to subside and stereotypes to be challenged. Third, the effect is not automatic. Contextual factors, pre-existing beliefs, and the nature of the counter-stereotypical encounter all shape whether contact translates into attitude change.

1.5. Perceived Danger and Risk Evaluation

1.5.1. Subjective Risk Perception

Perceived danger (PD) refers to citizens' subjective assessment of the physical and psychological risks of women's military service, particularly under high-threat conditions. As a domain-specific risk perception construct, it captures the belief that military service exposes women to dangers that are excessive or disproportionate.

Risk perception research has consistently shown that public judgements about hazards are not simply estimates of objective probability (Slovic, 1987). Among the qualitative dimensions that shape perceived risk, the fear factor is the most influential. Siegrist and Árvai (2020) describe dreaded risks as those that cannot easily be observed or controlled, lead to salient fatalities, are the consequence of involuntary exposure, and are catastrophic in their magnitude. Activities associated with high dread generate strong demand for protective regulation.

Slovic et al. (2005) showed that negative affect inflates perceived risk and shapes attitudes toward regulation independently of cognitive probability estimates. For perceived danger in the military context, the implication is that emotional reactions to women in combat conditions can drive policy opposition even when people acknowledge that women already serve effectively.

The mechanism by which affect shapes risk judgement is well documented. Skagerlund et al. (2020) tested the affect heuristic across two studies and 602 participants and found a strong inverse correlation between perceived risk and perceived benefit across domains. The pattern indicates that people evaluate activities through a single affective impression rather than through separate cognitive assessments of probability and payoff. Applied to the present context, an emotionally charged image of

women exposed to combat can depress perceived benefits of gender-neutral duty while simultaneously inflating perceived risks. A caveat is that subjective risk is not only distortion. Rundmo (1996) found that workers' risk ratings tracked real hazards, so perceived danger may partly reflect real risk.

1.5.2. Gendered Risk and Protective Norms

Perceived danger may activate gendered protective intuitions that operate through affect rather than deliberate reasoning. Several studies confirm that concerns about women's physical vulnerability are among the most frequently cited reasons for negative attitudes toward women's military roles (Nicol & Mayrand Nicol, 2024; Stachowitsch & Strand, 2024).

Brown et al. (2021), surveying risk perceptions across Ireland, found that women rated involuntary risks as more likely, more impactful, and higher overall than men did. The pattern held across most of the 17 risk categories examined and persisted after controlling for exposure, socioeconomic factors, and preparedness. Gender differences in risk perception, on this evidence, are not restricted to occupational or domestic hazards; they extend to the kinds of involuntary, high-consequence threats that characterise security and military contexts.

Critically, people may perceive danger independently of ideological orientations. A person may fully reject sexist beliefs and yet still view women's exposure to combat conditions as disproportionately dangerous. Excluding this predictor would risk misattributing danger-based resistance to ideological causes. For this reason, perceived danger is included in the present study as a primary predictor in its own right, and is also examined as a potential moderator of selected predictor–outcome associations.

1.6. Perceived Fairness as an Evaluative Dimension

1.6.1. Fairness and Legitimacy in Policy Evaluation

Attitudes toward contested policies do not arise solely from group membership or ideological orientation; they also emerge from evaluations of fairness and legitimacy. Tyler (2006) defines legitimacy as a psychological property of authorities, institutions, and social arrangements. When people see an arrangement as appropriate, proper, and just, they feel obliged to defer to it voluntarily, rather than comply only out of fear of sanctions or hope of reward.

A large body of evidence from procedural justice research supports this view. Lind and Tyler (1988) established that procedural fairness shapes how people evaluate

legal and institutional authorities more than the favourability of the outcomes they receive. Tyler (2003) later demonstrated that procedural fairness perceptions are the primary factor shaping public views of the police and courts, operating independently of deterrence. When institutions make decisions through procedures that people see as neutral, consistent, and respectful, they comply more willingly even when they disagree with specific outcomes.

Extensions of this framework show that legitimacy rests on more than process alone. Jackson et al. (2012) tested Tyler's model in England and Wales and proposed a twin-pronged conception of legitimacy based on both recognition of authority and moral alignment with it. Their analyses showed that moral alignment between citizens and the police explains variation in compliance at least as strongly as felt obligation to obey. In a vignette experiment conducted in the Netherlands, Brummel and de Blok (2024) found that accountability arrangements directed toward citizens increased perceived legitimacy, whereas accountability directed toward politicians did not. Legitimacy, on this evidence, is responsive to perceived responsiveness to the public rather than to institutional oversight in the abstract.

Two further findings extend these mechanisms to policy contexts. Tyran and Feld (2001), using a public-goods experiment, showed that rules accepted through a referendum produced higher compliance than rules imposed without participation, even when backed only by mild sanctions. Procedural legitimacy, this suggests, can substitute at least partially for coercive enforcement. Herian et al. (2012), in a field experiment with residents of Lincoln, Nebraska, reported that exposure to information about deliberative public participation increased perceptions of procedural fairness. They also found that fairness perceptions more strongly shaped overall evaluations of local government among people who were less informed about it, which suggests that fairness cues carry greater weight when citizens have less direct knowledge of institutional performance. Taken together, these findings establish that fairness and legitimacy judgments shape whether citizens accept contested policies, comply with them, and cooperate with the institutions that enact them (Marien & Werner, 2019; Ruder & Woods, 2020), independent of whether the policies advance their own interests.

For the present study, the literature reviewed here supports two points. Perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty is expected to predict policy support and Interpersonal Decision Support above and beyond ideological orientations. At the same time, fairness perceptions are themselves shaped by deeper value systems, since a person may intellectually support gender equality yet still view equal military duty as unfair if they believe that men and women differ in ways that warrant different civic treatment.

This double role of fairness, as both a predictor and an outcome of upstream beliefs, justifies a mediation approach.

1.6.2. Analytical Role of Fairness in the Present Study

Within the present model, the perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty is positioned as a mediating mechanism between ideological orientations and policy attitudes. The logic follows from the literature reviewed above. Authoritarian and social-dominance values are expected to lower perceived fairness, because equal duty disrupts conventional gender arrangements and challenges status-based hierarchies that authoritarian and dominance-orientated individuals tend to endorse. Modern sexism and gender essentialism are likewise expected to lower perceived fairness, because both belief systems treat gender-based distinctions in civic obligations as natural or necessary. People low on these constructs are likely to view equal duty as a logical consequence of shared citizenship and therefore as procedurally and distributively fair.

The mediational structure mirrors findings in adjacent policy domains. Kollmann et al. (2024) showed that perceived fairness mediated the link between distributive outcome evaluations and support for an environmental policy. Wilton et al. (2019) documented a similar indirect route from gender essentialist beliefs to policy support, operating through evaluative judgements about the targeted group. Applying this logic to the present study, perceived fairness is treated as an intermediate evaluative judgement through which upstream value systems translate into specific support for, or opposition to, gender-neutral military duty. Mediation is tested using bootstrapped indirect effects as recommended by Hayes (2018) and Igartua and Hayes (2021).

1.7. Contextual Factors and Controls

1.7.1. Socio-Demographic Characteristics

Several socio-demographic variables are included as statistical controls to ensure that predictor effects on policy support for gender-neutral military duty and Interpersonal Decision Support are not confounded by differences in respondent characteristics.

Gender is controlled because women and men are typically affected differently by conscription and compulsory service policies, and prior research consistently documents gender differences across the ideological and evaluative constructs measured in the present study (Off et al. 2022; Brown et al. 2021). Age is included because generational cohorts differ in exposure to traditional gender-role socialisation, and because younger cohorts show systematically different patterns in modern sexism (Off et al., 2022) and in

attitudes towards women's military integration (Hardt & von Hlatky, 2025). Education is included as a proxy for exposure to egalitarian and civic-liberal values; Ivarsson et al. (2005) found that education was among the strongest predictors of positive attitudes towards women in the Swedish Armed Forces. Region and settlement type are included to capture variation in war exposure and civic norms across Ukraine. Frontline and occupied regions differ substantially from rear regions in lived experience, and such geographic heterogeneity is relevant in Ukrainian wartime research (Prykhodko et al., 2020). Displacement status is included because internally displaced people and refugees abroad may evaluate military policies through the lens of war-related experience that differs from that of non-displaced citizens. Having daughters is included because respondents with daughters may evaluate policies that extend military obligation to women differently from respondents without daughters.

1.7.2. Military Ties and War-Related Experience

Two additional variables are included as controls to capture respondents' direct and indirect involvement with military service.

Military ties are defined as having family members or close friends currently or previously serving in the Armed Forces of Ukraine. They are controlled for two reasons. Personal exposure to the realities of service may shape how respondents form judgements about women's military roles, given that abstract attitudes often differ from those grounded in concrete experience. Finseraas et al. (2016) demonstrated this logic in a Norwegian army setting, where direct exposure to female colleagues reduced some gendered stereotypes among male conscripts. In addition, military ties are likely correlated with contact with women service members, and the two must be analytically separated to identify the specific effect of intergroup contact on policy attitudes (Nicol & Mayrand Nicol, 2024).

Service status serves as a separate control because active service members and veterans may hold systematically different attitudes from civilians. These differences may reflect direct operational experience, institutional socialisation within the Armed Forces, and exposure to gender-integrated units in practice. Hardt and von Hlatky (2025) reported that military personnel's attitudes toward gender integration were shaped by specific deployment contexts and the value they attributed to women's contributions on the battlefield, suggesting that service-related variation must be controlled in studies of civilian policy attitudes.

1.8. Conceptual Model

The present study tests a conceptual model in which socio-psychological factors shape two distinct outcomes related to women's participation in the security sector. These outcomes are **Policy Support (PS)** for gender-neutral compulsory military service and **Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS)**, defined as interpersonal support for a close woman's voluntary decision to serve in the military, operationalised as interpersonal support for a close woman's voluntary decision to serve.

1.8.1. Evolution of the Model

The conceptual model was revised several times during the study design. The original model developed at the project proposal stage included two additional ideological constructs, namely zero-sum gender beliefs and motivation to justify the existing gender system. Following feedback from the ethics review committee and consultations with the academic supervisor, these two constructs were removed from the instrument to reduce respondent burden, shorten the questionnaire, and concentrate the analytic focus on the most theoretically central predictors.

In addition, the study was extended to include a second outcome variable, Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS), alongside the originally planned outcome of policy support for gender-neutral military duty. This addition was introduced to capture not only policy-level attitudes but also interpersonal behavioural responses to women's voluntary military service, which are theoretically distinct but empirically related. Including both outcomes allows the thesis to address a broader spectrum of support, ranging from abstract policy evaluation to concrete interpersonal response.

1.8.2. Structure of the Final Model

The final model includes four groups of predictors. Ideological orientations cover Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) and Social Dominance Orientation (SDO). Gender-related beliefs cover Modern Sexism (MS) and Gender Essentialism (GE). Intergroup contact with women service members covers Contact Quantity (CQ) and Contact Quality (CQual). The fourth group consists of perceived danger of women's military service (PD).

Perceived Fairness of gender-neutral military duty (PF) is positioned as a central mediator. It is theorised to explain how ideological orientations, gender-related beliefs, and perceived danger influence the two outcomes. Intergroup contact, by contrast, is theorised to influence the outcomes directly, without being mediated through perceived fairness.

The predictors are arranged according to how closely they relate to the outcomes. Ideological orientations are the most distal predictors because they reflect broad worldview dispositions that are not specific to gender or to military service. Gender-related beliefs sit closer to the topic of the study because they operate within the domain of gender. The third group contains experiential and context-specific variables, which reflect respondents' direct interactions with women service members and their perception of risk. Perceived Fairness of gender-neutral military duty is the most proximal variable because it captures the moral evaluation of the specific policy at stake.

1.8.3. Hypotheses

Drawing on this framework, the study advances five hypotheses with corresponding sub-hypotheses. The direction of each expected association is specified explicitly.

H1. Ideological orientations are negatively associated with both outcomes.

People who strongly value obedience to authority and accept social hierarchies tend to uphold traditional social roles, including traditional gender roles. Gender-neutral compulsory military service represents a departure from such traditional roles. It is therefore expected to be viewed as less fair by individuals with strong authoritarian or social-dominance orientations, which should in turn translate into lower support for the policy and lower support for close women who choose to serve.

H1a. Higher scores on Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA) will be associated with **lower** Policy Support (PS) and **lower** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS).

H1b. Higher scores on Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) will be associated with **lower** Policy Support (PS) and **lower** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS).

H2. Gender-related beliefs are negatively associated with both outcomes.

Modern Sexism denies the continued existence of gender discrimination, and Gender Essentialism treats gender differences as biologically determined. Both belief systems conflict with the premise that women and men should carry equal military obligations. Individuals who hold these beliefs are therefore expected to view gender-neutral compulsory military service as unfair or unreasonable, and to show lower support for the policy as well as lower interpersonal support for close women who choose to serve.

H2a. Higher scores on Modern Sexism (MS) will be associated with **lower** Policy Support (PS) and **lower** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS).

H2b. Higher scores on Gender Essentialism (GE) will be associated with **lower** Policy Support (PS) and **lower** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS).

H3. Intergroup contact with women service members is positively associated with both outcomes.

According to the contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), positive interaction with members of an outgroup reduces prejudice and increases support for equal treatment. More recent research shows that the quality of contact matters more than the simple frequency of contact. In this study, intergroup contact is conceptualised as a direct predictor of the two outcomes rather than as a factor mediated through perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty.

H3a. Higher Contact Quantity (CQ) with women service members will be associated with **higher** Policy Support (PS) and **higher** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS).

H3b. Higher Contact Quality (CQual) with women service members will be associated with **higher** Policy Support (PS) and **higher** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS). The effect of Contact Quality is expected to be stronger than the effect of Contact Quantity.

H4. Perceived danger is negatively associated with both outcomes.

When people see military service as especially dangerous for women, this can trigger protective or paternalistic concerns. Such concerns are expected to conflict with the idea of equal military duty, because assigning the same obligation to a group perceived as more vulnerable is likely to be viewed as unfair. Higher perceived danger is therefore expected to reduce support for the policy and to reduce interpersonal support for close women who choose to serve.

H4. Higher Perceived Danger (PD) of women's military service will be associated with **lower** Policy Support (PS) and **lower** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS).

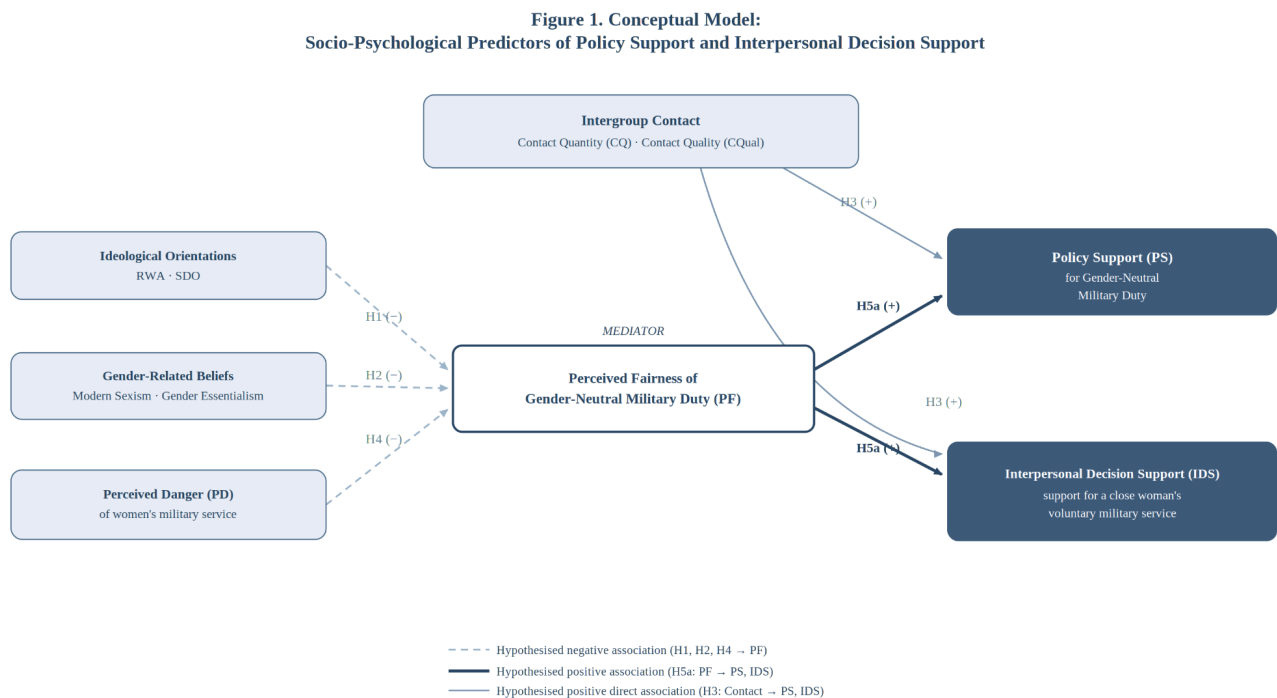
H5. Perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty is the central mediator in the model.

Perceived fairness of gender-neutral military duty is theorised as the psychological mechanism that most directly links upstream beliefs and contextual perceptions to both policy attitudes and interpersonal responses. People who see gender-equal conscription as fair and consistent with equal citizenship are more likely to support both the policy itself and close women who choose to serve.

H5a. Higher Perceived Fairness (PF) of gender-neutral military duty will be associated with **higher** Policy Support (PS) and **higher** Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS).

H5b. Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty is expected to partially or fully mediate the associations between ideological orientations (H1), gender-related beliefs (H2), and perceived danger (H4) and Policy Support. The mediation analysis focuses on Policy Support as the outcome, as this policy-level construct was prioritized in the preregistered plan as the primary test of the fairness mechanism. The full conceptual model is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1. *Conceptual Model: Socio-Psychological Predictors of Policy Support and Interpersonal Decision Support*



Note. Dashed arrows indicate hypothesised negative associations (H1, H2, H4); solid arrows indicate hypothesised positive associations (H3, H5a). Mediation by PF (H5b) is tested for Policy Support.

CHAPTER 2. EMPIRICAL STUDY

2.1. Study Design and Overview

2.1.1. Design type and Rationale

This study uses an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) in which the quantitative strand is primary and the qualitative strand plays a supporting role. The data come from a single cross-sectional online survey of Ukrainian adults that combined closed-ended psychometric scales with three optional open-ended items. The quantitative strand is confirmatory and tests a pre-specified set of hypotheses about the socio-psychological predictors of public support for a gender-neutral military duty policy in Ukraine and the mechanisms linking them. The qualitative strand is a systematic qualitative content analysis (QCA; Schreier, 2012) of the open-ended item on what a fair approach to compulsory military duty would mean, which elaborates, in respondents' own words, the evaluative construct that the quantitative model identifies as central.

A confirmatory approach was chosen for the quantitative strand because the theoretical framework in Chapter 1 generates specific directional predictions about which factors increase or decrease policy support, and through what mechanisms. A cross-sectional online survey was a particularly well-suited fit for these aims. The key constructs in this study, ideological orientations, gender-related beliefs, contact experiences, and risk perceptions, are individual psychological traits. Researchers usually assess such traits through self-report. A survey can also measure many predictors and outcomes at once, in a single wave. Similar studies on gender attitudes and policy support have used the same design (Nicol & Mayrand Nicol, 2024; Stachowitsch & Strand, 2024).

The closed and open-ended data were collected at the same time, in one survey, but the two strands were analysed in sequence. The quantitative model comes first and shows that perceived fairness is the central mediator (H5). The qualitative content analysis then shows how respondents themselves understand that fairness. The two strands are brought together in a joint display (Guetterman, Feters, & Creswell, 2015), which links the fairness construals to policy-support quartiles. Together, the quantitative part shows what predicts policy attitudes, and the qualitative part shows how respondents understand the key construct of fairness.

2.1.2. Analytic strategy overview

All quantitative analyses were conducted in IBM SPSS Statistics and JASP; JASP was used for exploratory factor analyses and bootstrapped mediation, and SPSS for all other analyses. The analytic plan proceeds in seven steps:

- (1) descriptive statistics for all composite scores and demographics;
- (2) exploratory factor analysis (Principal Axis Factoring) for each scale with four or more items;
- (3) reliability analysis (Cronbach's α);
- (4) bivariate Pearson correlations among the ten composites and the two outcomes;
- (5) two hierarchical OLS regressions predicting Policy Support and Interpersonal Decision Support, with predictors entered in five theoretically ordered blocks;
- (6) bootstrapped mediation testing Perceived Fairness as the mediator of effects on Policy Support (H5b);
- (7) qualitative content analysis of the open-ended fairness item (Q49), integrated with the quantitative results in a joint display.

2.2. Preregistration

2.2.1. Preregistered Hypotheses and Outcomes

This study was preregistered on the Open Science Framework (OSF) prior to data collection. The registration was initiated on 6 April 2026 and approved by the academic supervisor (M. Chayinska) on 9 April 2026. The preregistration is currently under embargo and will become publicly available on 30 June 2026. An anonymous view-only link is available at:

https://osf.io/pj6ey/overview?view_only=5e9a4f0ba344411d87aac1389194abfc

The preregistration documents the full hypothesis set (H1-H5 with all sub-hypotheses), the planned measures and scoring rules, the statistical analysis plan, and the target sample size. The preregistered analysis plan corresponds directly to the **seven-step** procedure described in Section 2.1.2.

2.2.2. Deviations from the preregistered plan

Four minor deviations from the preregistered analytic plan are noted here for full transparency.

First, during the reliability analysis of the Modern Sexism scale, one reverse-worded item showed a low corrected item-total correlation and substantially attenuated the internal

consistency of the scale. Its removal improved Cronbach's alpha from .90 to .91. The refined five-item composite was therefore used in all subsequent analyses in place of the originally preregistered six-item version. This refinement was both theoretically and methodologically justified, and the full rationale is reported in the Measures section.

Second, the preregistered plan did not fully specify how to handle missing data arising from the skip-logic structure of the contact items. Respondents who reported never having interacted with women service members (Q3) were routed past the subsequent items on contact frequency and quality (Q3.1-Q3.4) and were therefore missing by design on these indicators. For the composite indices of Contact Quantity and Contact Quality, pairwise mean imputation was applied. Listwise deletion was applied only in the hierarchical regression models in which Contact Quality served as a predictor, which explains the reduced sample size in those specific analyses.

Third, the analysis of the two outcome variables was conducted using hierarchical multiple regression with theoretically ordered blocks of predictors, rather than a single-step entry of all predictors simultaneously. This decision was made in consultation with the academic supervisor to allow a more transparent assessment of the incremental contribution of each conceptual block: socio-demographic controls, ideological orientations, gender-related beliefs, contextual and experiential variables, and perceived fairness.

Fourth, the qualitative plan changed in two ways. The preregistration described a thematic analysis of all three open-ended items (Q49–Q51). In this thesis, the qualitative work uses qualitative content analysis instead, and it covers only the fairness item (Q49), because that item directly measures the central construct. The analysis of Q50 and Q51 is moved to a later research article, together with the moderation models and the extra robustness checks (gender-stratified models and a sensitivity analysis without Perceived Danger).

All other elements of the preregistered plan, including the hypotheses, sample size targets, measurement instruments, and the overall analytic approach, were followed as specified.

2.3. Ethical Approval and Ethical Considerations

2.3.1. Ethics committee approval

The study received ethical approval from the Ethics Committee of the National Psychological Association of Ukraine (NPA). The application was submitted on 2 February 2026 and approved at the committee meeting on 16 February 2026 (Protocol No. 4/26, reviewer: L. Opanasenko). The committee authorised the commencement of data collection and rated the study at the highest level on five of the six evaluation criteria. A score of 4 out of 5 was assigned on methodological compliance, with the reviewer noting that the initial submission did not include detailed documentation of the

psychodiagnostic instrumentation (authorship, adaptation, validity, and reliability of the scales) and recommend considering additional standardised instruments to enrich the empirical analysis.

In response to this feedback, and following consultations with the academic supervisor, three changes were made before the launch of data collection. The instrumentation documentation was expanded to specify the source, adaptation, and scoring procedures for each scale. The scope of the predictor set was refined to focus on a smaller number of theoretically central constructs.

The initial research proposal had included two additional predictors – zero-sum gender beliefs and self-placement on the political ideology spectrum – which were removed to keep the mediation model manageable for a master's thesis. This refocused the analysis on the dual-process framework (RWA and SDO), gender-related beliefs (modern sexism and gender essentialism), intergroup contact, and perceived danger. A secondary outcome variable was also added: Interpersonal Decision Support toward a close woman who volunteers for military service. This measure is grounded in the reasoned action framework (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). The study, therefore, includes both abstract policy support and personal behavioural intentions – two outcomes that may show different patterns, a distinction that matters for both theory and practice.

The study was conducted in accordance with the Ethical Code of Psychologists of Ukraine and the ethical principles of the American Psychological Association. Full ethics committee documentation is provided in **Appendix B**.

2.3.2. Informed consent and participant rights

All participants provided informed consent prior to completing the survey. The consent form described the study's aim, estimated completion time of approximately 10 minutes, the voluntary nature of participation, the right to withdraw at any time without consequences or explanation by closing the browser tab, the right to skip any individual question, and the absence of any personal data collection. Contact information for the researcher and the academic supervisor was provided. Participants confirmed their consent by clicking "Next" at the start of the survey. Only adults aged 18 and above were eligible to participate. The full informed consent text is provided in **Appendix B**.

2.3.3. Data protection and anonymity

The study collected no personally identifiable information. Names, IP addresses, and contact details were not recorded. All data was stored in encrypted form on a secure cloud server. Data will be retained for three years following the completion of the study

and then permanently destroyed. Given that the survey topic touches on sensitive social and political issues, participants were informed of the possibility of mild emotional discomfort and were provided with contact information for free psychological support services at both the beginning and end of the survey. During the data collection period, it was identified that one of the originally listed support lines (Lifeline Ukraine, 733) was no longer operational. The questionnaire was accordingly updated to include the psychological support resource of the National Psychological Association of Ukraine (help.npa-ua.org), alongside the National Mental Health Line of the Ministry of Health of Ukraine (0 800 100 102) and the IOM Emotional Support Line (0 800 211 444).

2.3.4. Pilot Cognitive Testing of the Survey Instrument

The full survey instrument was tested, prior to the main data collection, with a pilot sample of 21 Ukrainian adult respondents (14 women, 6 men, 1 undisclosed). The pilot sample was approximately balanced across the four main age groups (18–25, 26–35, 36–45, and 46–60). Pilot data collection ran from 9 to 12 March 2026 through the snowball recruitment channels. Respondents completed the full questionnaire under standard survey conditions and were additionally asked to report completion time and to provide open-ended feedback on item clarity, response options, survey logic, and cognitive load.

Reported completion times ranged from approximately 5 to 15 minutes, with a median of about 10 minutes. This was consistent with the target length of the instrument. Ten of the 21 pilot respondents provided open-ended feedback, which was analysed thematically to identify recurring issues.

Several revisions were made to the instrument on the basis of this feedback. Skip logic was added to the contact-with-women-service-members block, so that items measuring contact quality (Q3.2-Q3.4) are administered only to respondents who report a non-zero contact frequency in the preceding item. Items in the social dominance orientation scale were clarified to indicate that the reference is to broad social groups in general, rather than to any specific group that respondents might have in mind. Two perceived-danger items (Q27 and Q28) that pilot respondents described as overlapping were revised to distinguish more clearly between general danger perception and comparative risk to women. The reverse-scored item introducing the Interpersonal Decision Support block (Q38) was rechecked for polarity consistency and slightly rephrased.

After these revisions, two additional cognitive interviews were conducted with two respondents drawn from the same pilot sample. Both confirmed that the revised

items read more clearly and that no new comprehension difficulties arose. No further revisions were made before the launch of the main data collection wave on 19 March 2026.

The 21 pilot responses were excluded from the analytic sample reported in this thesis, because pilot respondents completed an earlier version of the instrument that differed from the final version in survey logic and item wording. The final analytic sample therefore consists only of respondents recruited during the main data collection wave.

2.4. Participants

2.4.1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Participation was open to adult residents of Ukraine and Ukrainians residing abroad. Eligibility was restricted to individuals aged 18 or above, consistent with the age at which legal military obligation applies in Ukraine and with the ethical requirements of the study approved by the Ethics Committee (see Section 2.3). There were no gender, regional, educational, or occupational restrictions. The survey was administered in Ukrainian, which served as a de facto linguistic inclusion criterion.

Two exclusion rules were applied after data collection. First, the 21 respondents who completed the pilot version of the questionnaire (9-12 March 2026) were excluded from the analytic sample. Second, respondents who failed or did not answer the attention-check item embedded in the questionnaire (Q16, which required selecting the response option "4") were excluded from further analysis. Of the 802 respondents ... 13 were excluded ... 10 selected a response other than "4", and 3 did not provide a response to the attention-check item.

The final analytic sample consists of 789 respondents.

2.4.2. Current sample description

The analytic sample comprises 789 adult respondents recruited during the main data collection wave (19 March – 13 May 2026). Key demographic characteristics are presented in Figure 2.

Sample composition and representativeness. The sample is predominantly female (67.8%), over-representing women compared to the general Ukrainian population (53.5%; United Nations, 2024). Educational attainment is substantially higher than the national average, with 80.7% holding higher education degrees versus approximately 50% of the working-age population (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and

Development [OECD], 2023). The sample is strongly urban (89.4%), exceeding the national urban population share of 70.3% by 19 percentage points (World Bank, 2024).

Geographic distribution follows the standard five-region Ukrainian classification (Liebich et al., 2019):

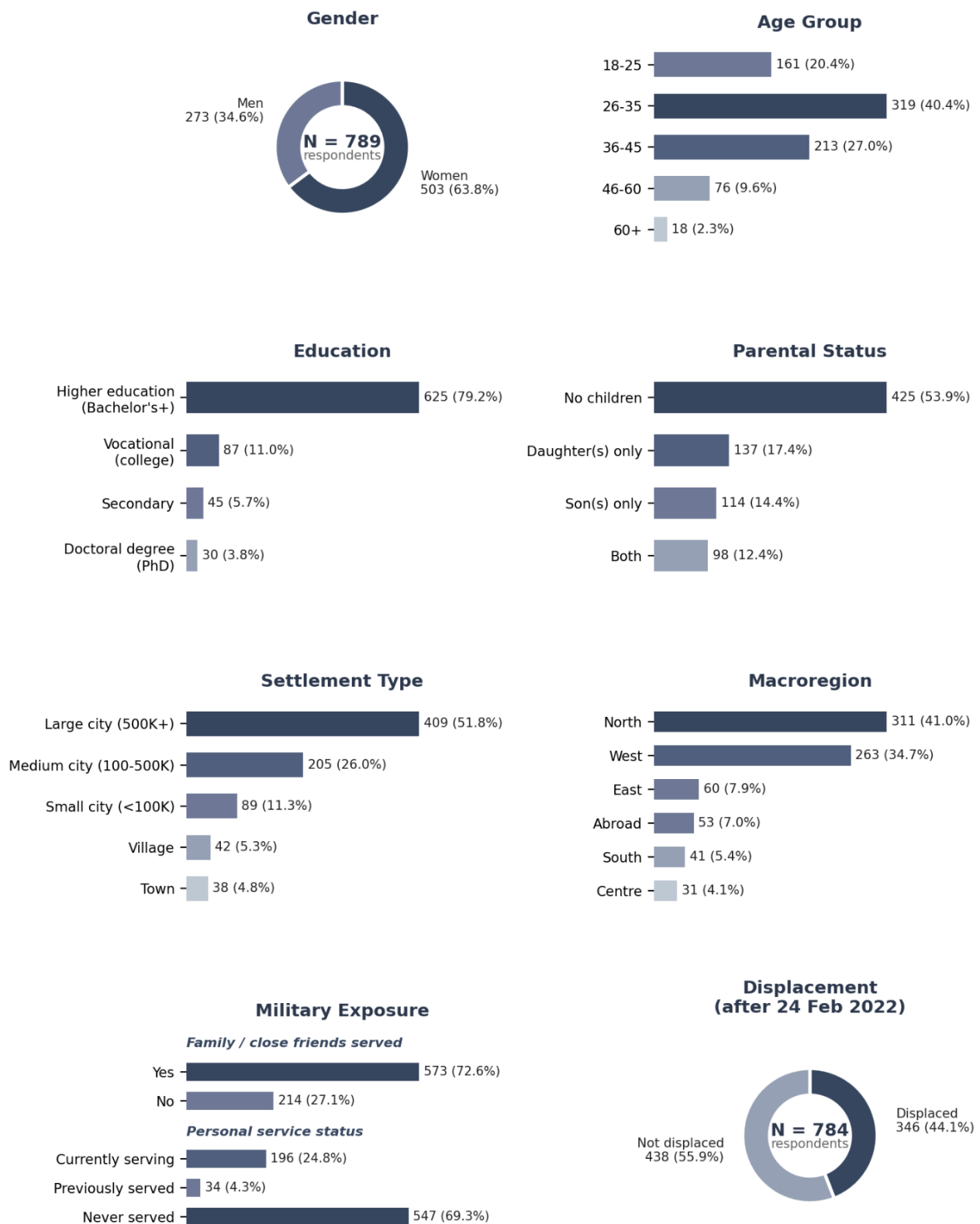
- North (Kyiv city, Kyiv, Zhytomyr, Sumy, and Chernihiv oblasts),
- West (Volyn, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk, Lviv, Rivne, Ternopil, Khmelnytskyi, and Chernivtsi oblasts),
- Centre (Vinnytsia, Kirovohrad, Poltava, and Cherkasy oblasts),
- East (Donetsk, Luhansk, Kharkiv, and Dnipropetrovsk oblasts), and South (Zaporizhzhia, Mykolaiv, Odesa, and Kherson oblasts).

Ukrainian citizens currently residing abroad were classified separately.

War-related characteristics reflect the ongoing conflict context. Nearly half (45.5%) reported residential displacement since 24 February 2022, while the majority (74.1%) have family members or close friends with military service experience. Additionally, 21.7% are currently serving in the Armed Forces themselves.

This profile reflects an adult, urban, highly educated, and female-majority population with extensive military exposure—characteristics consistent with online samples recruited through social media during wartime.

Figure 2. Sample Characteristics (N = 789)



Note. N = 789. Macroregion percentages are of respondents reporting an oblast (n = 759); displacement percentages are of those answering the item (n = 784). Gender excludes 11 "prefer not to say" and 2 non-responses; personal service status excludes 11 "prefer not to say."

2.5. Power Analysis and Sample Size

2.5.1. Assumptions and target sample size

Sample size was based on the most demanding analysis, the test of indirect effects in mediation (Hayes, 2018).

Sample size calculations were performed using an online mediation calculator (Schoemann et al., 2017; www.quantpsy.org/medmc/medmc.htm), which follows established methods from Fritz and MacKinnon (2007). The results indicated minimum requirements of 166 participants for multiple regression, 462 for mediation analysis, and 395 for moderation testing under standard settings ($\alpha = .05$, power = .80, small-to-medium effect sizes).

The largest requirement (mediation) set the target at 500 completed responses, with 600+ as a goal to cover incomplete or failed cases.

2.5.2. Final target and stopping rule

Data collection was designed as a single continuous wave with a predetermined closing date, rather than a fixed-N stopping rule. The cut-off was set at 17 April 2026, chosen to leave sufficient time for data cleaning, analysis, and thesis preparation before the pre-defense plagiarism check deadline. Collection ran from 19 March 2026 until the cut-off, with no interim analyses conducted during this period, in line with the preregistered analytic plan (OSF: <https://osf.io/pj6ey>).

At cut-off, 823 raw responses had been received. After excluding 21 pilot participants and 13 respondents who failed the embedded attention check (10 selected an incorrect response value and 3 did not respond), the final analytic sample comprised $N = 789$. This sample exceeds the most demanding power benchmark by a margin of approximately 38%, providing adequate statistical power for all planned analyses, including bootstrapped mediation and moderation tests with multiple covariates.

2.6. Sampling and Recruitment

2.6.1. Sampling approach

A non-probability convenience sampling strategy combined with snowball referral was used. This approach was chosen for three reasons. First, no sampling frame of the Ukrainian adult population with contact details is available for academic researchers, particularly during wartime when many official registries are restricted or disrupted.

Second, the study required respondents with internet access and willingness to reflect on a politically sensitive topic, which is more effectively reached through voluntary online participation than through random-digit dialling or mail surveys. Third, resource and time constraints of a master's thesis project precluded probability-based sampling.

The eligibility criteria were: age 18 or above, current residence in Ukraine or temporary residence abroad as a Ukrainian citizen, and sufficient Ukrainian-language proficiency to complete the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and uncompensated. Respondents could withdraw at any point by closing the browser tab and could skip any individual item they preferred not to answer.

The implications of the non-probability design for the generalisability of findings are addressed in the limitations section of Chapter 3.

2.6.2. Recruitment channels and procedures

The survey link was distributed between 19 March and 17 April 2026 through a coordinated multi-channel online outreach strategy. Recruitment relied on four overlapping mechanisms.

The survey link was first disseminated through the author's personal accounts on Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram, and through direct messages sent via Viber, WhatsApp, and Signal.

It was also posted in 83 thematic Facebook groups and Telegram channels that, taken together, covered all regions of Ukraine under government control (excluding the temporarily occupied territories). These communities included audiences focused on civic activism, gender equality, education, veteran affairs, and regional discussion pages across different oblasts.

In parallel, the survey was reshared by three opinion leaders with established audiences on Ukrainian social media, each relevant to the study topic: a currently serving servicewoman of the Armed Forces of Ukraine, a veteran of the Armed Forces, and a military psychologist. At the time of the reshare, each opinion leader had an estimated 15,000 to 20,000 active followers, yielding a combined reach of approximately 45,000 to 60,000 users. Actual exposure was likely lower, because platform algorithms limit how many followers see any given post. These three channels were particularly valuable because their audiences include Ukrainians with direct personal, professional, or social ties to the military sphere – a population highly relevant to the research question.

A snowball mechanism was activated by explicitly inviting respondents, at the end of the questionnaire, to share the link within their own networks if they considered the study relevant to others.

Overall, the recruitment strategy yielded a broad, though non-probabilistic, cross-section of Ukrainian-speaking adults with varied regional, educational, and military-exposure profiles.

2.7. Procedure

2.7.1. Survey administration and questionnaire structure

Data collection was conducted entirely online via Google Forms. The platform was selected for its free availability, its compatibility with mobile and desktop devices, and its native Ukrainian-language interface. The full instrument was administered in Ukrainian only, consistent with the definition of the target population as Ukrainian-speaking adult residents of Ukraine or Ukrainian citizens currently residing abroad.

Upon opening the survey link, respondents were first presented with an informed consent page containing information about the aims of the study, the voluntary and anonymous nature of participation, the approximate completion time, the contact details of the researcher, and the ethical approval reference (see Section 2.3.2 for the full content of the consent form). Only after explicitly indicating their consent were respondents directed to the substantive items.

The questionnaire included seven sections:

- (1) informed consent;
- (2) socio-demographic items;
- (3) contact with women service members;
- (4) the ideological and gender-related belief scales;
- (5) the attention-check item;
- (6) the author-developed measures of Perceived Danger, Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty, Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty, and Interpersonal Decision Support;
- (7) three open-ended questions.

Multi-item scales used a 7-point forced-choice Likert response format (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*), with items displayed in the order specified in the original source of each measure. No items were mandatory except the informed consent page, so respondents could skip any individual item they preferred not to answer.

2.7.2. Timing and data export

Data collection took place in two phases. The pilot phase ran from 9 to 12 March 2026 with 21 respondents who completed the pre-revision version of the instrument; these responses were excluded from the analytic sample. The main data collection wave ran continuously from 19 March to 13 May 2026 until the preregistered cut-off date, with no interim analyses conducted prior to the cut-off. The final analytic sample (N = 789) was drawn from the main wave only.

Responses were exported from Google Forms as a .csv file after the close of data collection and imported into IBM SPSS Statistics for cleaning and analysis. Throughout the fieldwork period, no identifying information was collected, and data was stored on Google servers.

2.8. Measures

Original English-language scales (RWA, SDO, Modern Sexism, Gender Essentialism, and related measures) were translated into Ukrainian and adapted for the present study following the ITC Guidelines for Translating and Adapting Tests (International Test Commission, 2017). Each scale was forward-translated, reviewed for cultural and linguistic equivalence, and refined based on pilot cognitive testing

2.8.1. Socio-demographics

Standard socio-demographic variables were collected at the end of the questionnaire. Age was recorded in five categories (18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-60, and 60 and above), and gender in three options (woman, man, prefer not to disclose). Level of education used four categories: secondary, vocational, higher (bachelor's, specialist's, or master's degree), and postgraduate research degree. Region of current residence was selected from a list of Ukraine's administrative regions, with an additional "abroad" option for Ukrainian citizens residing outside the country at the time of participation. Type of settlement was recorded in five categories (village, urban-type settlement, small city, medium-sized city, large city). Displacement status after 24 February 2022 was recorded as a binary variable (yes / no). Number and gender composition of children was captured with four categories (no children, daughter(s) only, son(s) only, both daughters and sons).

These variables characterised the composition of the sample (**Figure 2**). They also provided age, gender, and education as statistical controls in subsequent regression analyses. Parental status and displacement status were included as potentially relevant contextual factors.

2.8.2. *Military ties and service status*

Two categorical items captured respondents' exposure to the military sphere. The first item asked whether close family members or close friends were currently serving, or had previously served, in the Armed Forces of Ukraine or other security institutions (*yes / no*). The second item asked whether the respondent was currently serving, had previously served, was a reservist, or had no personal military involvement (five response categories).

These items served two purposes. They described the sample and acted as contextual covariates in robustness checks.

2.8.3. *Contact with women service members (quantity and quality)*

Contact with women service members was assessed along two dimensions drawn from the intergroup contact literature (Allport, 1954; Islam & Hewstone, 1993; Voci & Hewstone, 2003): quantity of contact (CQ) and quality of contact (CQual). All items referred to the period since the start of the full-scale invasion on 24 February 2022, in order to anchor respondents in a common temporal frame. A skip logic was applied: respondents who reported no contact on the first quantity item (Q3) were routed past the subsequent items and recorded as missing by design on Q3.1–Q3.4.

Contact quantity (CQ) was assessed with two items:

1. *"How often since the start of the full-scale invasion (24 Feb 2022) have you communicated (in person or online) with women service members?"*,
2. *"How often since the full-scale invasion have you worked, studied, or volunteered together with women service members?"*

Responses ranged from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*very often*). The two items showed a strong positive Pearson correlation, $r = .75$, $p < .001$, indicating convergence on a common underlying construct. A composite index was computed as the mean of the two items.

Contact quality (CQual) was assessed with three items capturing the affective and relational tone of interactions with women service members:

1. *"During interactions with women service members, it felt tense"* (reverse-coded),
2. *"Interactions with women service members were generally positive"*,
3. *"There was mutual respect during interactions with women service members"*.

The first item was reverse-coded before analysis. Internal consistency was acceptable, Cronbach's $\alpha = .77$. A composite index was computed as the mean of the three items, with higher scores reflecting more positive contact experiences. Because the CQual scale consists of three items, a formal EFA was not performed; the conceptual unidimensionality of the scale is supported by prior work (Voci & Hewstone, 2003).

2.8.4. Right-Wing Authoritarianism (RWA)

Right-Wing Authoritarianism was measured with six items adapted from the Very Short Authoritarianism Scale (VSA-6; Bizumic & Duckitt, 2018). The items were:

1. *"Our country needs strong leaders who can ensure order and stability"*,
2. *"People should respect legitimate authority and official state institutions"*,
3. *"Traditional moral values must be preserved at all costs during periods of social change"*,
4. *"When people reject traditional norms and rules, it can pose a threat to society"*,
5. *"In difficult times for the country, citizens should support the official leadership of the state"*,
6. *"Too much freedom without clear rules may threaten the stability of society"*. No items were reverse-coded.

A one-factor solution was supported: KMO = .67 and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < .001$). The factor accounted for 31.23% of the variance. Loadings ranged from .42 to .75, so all six items were retained. Cronbach's $\alpha = .72$. The composite RWA score is the mean of the six items.

2.8.5. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO)

Social Dominance Orientation was measured with six items adapted from the short form of the SDO7 scale (Ho et al., 2015). The items were:

1. *"Some social groups deserve more influence and opportunities than others"*,
2. *"No social group should dominate others"* (reverse-coded),
3. *"It is acceptable for some social groups to have more privileges than others"*,
4. *"Society should strive to reduce inequalities between groups"* (reverse-coded),
5. *"In society, some groups naturally occupy a higher status than others"*,
6. *"Achieving equality between social groups should be an important goal for society"* (reverse-coded).

The three reverse-coded items were recoded before analysis so that higher composite scores reflected stronger endorsement of group-based hierarchy.

A one-factor solution was supported: KMO = .72 and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < .001$). The factor accounted for 32.73% of the variance. Loadings ranged from .36 to .66; one item fell just below the .40 threshold but was retained for theoretical breadth and comparability with the original SDO7 short-form (Ho et al., 2015). Internal consistency was acceptable, Cronbach's $\alpha = .73$. The composite SDO score is the mean of the six items.

2.8.6. Attention check

A single attention-check item was embedded between the ideological belief scales and the author-developed measures. Respondents were instructed to select the response option "4" on a 7-point scale to confirm attentive reading. Respondents who selected any other response option, or who did not provide any response to this item, were excluded from the analytic sample. Of the 802 participants who completed the main data collection wave, 13 were excluded on this criterion (10 selected a different option and three did not respond).

2.8.7. Modern Sexism (MS)

Modern Sexism was measured with items adapted from the Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al., 1995). The original instrument includes six items, one of which was reverse-coded. During the reliability analysis of the main data, the reverse-coded item showed a low corrected item-total correlation and substantially reduced internal consistency. Its exclusion raised Cronbach's α from .90 to .91. The refined five-item composite was therefore used in all subsequent analyses.

The retained items were:

1. *"Society pays too much attention to women's issues",*
2. *"Discrimination against women is no longer a serious problem",*
3. *"Women's complaints about discrimination are often exaggerated",*
4. *"Women's movements have gone too far in their demands",*
5. *"Women's rights receive more attention than they deserve".*

A one-factor solution was supported: KMO = .86 and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < .001$). The factor accounted for 73.90% of the variance. Loadings ranged from .82 to .91. Cronbach's $\alpha = .91$. The composite MS score is the mean of the five retained items.

2.8.8. Gender Essentialism (GE)

Gender Essentialism was measured with a four-item author-developed scale adapted from Skewes et al. (2018). The items captured the belief that gender differences in behaviours, traits, and social roles are natural, biologically grounded, and relatively fixed. No items were reverse-coded. Example item wordings and the full four-item list are provided in Appendix A.

A one-factor solution was supported: KMO = .82 and Bartlett's test was significant ($p < .001$). The factor accounted for 67.40% of the variance. Loadings ranged

from .77 to .87. Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$. The composite GE score is the mean of the four items, with higher scores reflecting stronger endorsement of gender-essentialist beliefs.

2.8.9. Perceived Danger of women's military service (PD)

Perceived Danger was measured with a three-item author-developed scale capturing the belief that women face heightened danger relative to men during military service. The items referred to perceived differences in exposure to risk, vulnerability during service, and danger associated with participation in combat roles. Item wordings are provided in Appendix A. Higher scores indicate stronger perceptions of elevated danger for women.

Internal consistency was acceptable, Cronbach's $\alpha = .78$. A composite PD score was computed as the mean of the three items. A supplementary EFA using Principal Axis Factoring was conducted despite the short length of the scale; the results confirmed a unidimensional structure, with all three items loading on a single latent factor. Given the limited number of items and their conceptual coherence, the composite score was retained without further refinement.

2.8.10. Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty (PF)

Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty was measured with a four-item author-developed scale. The items assessed the extent to which respondents endorsed the principle that compulsory military obligation should apply equally to women and men, as well as the perceived justice of gender-asymmetric conscription as currently practised. One item was reverse-coded so that higher composite scores reflected stronger endorsement of equal military obligation. Item wordings are provided in Appendix A.

EFA results supported a unidimensional structure. Sampling adequacy was acceptable, KMO was above the .70 benchmark, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, $p < .001$ (full values reported in Appendix C9). A one-factor solution was retained, and all four items loaded substantively on the latent factor. Internal consistency was high, Cronbach's $\alpha = .85$. A composite PF score was computed as the mean of the four items.

2.8.11. Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty (PS)

Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty was measured with a four-item author-developed scale. The items were:

1. *"I support introducing gender-neutral (equal for women and men) compulsory military service",*

2. *"Overall, I feel positive about the idea of gender-neutral (equal for women and men) compulsory service"*,
3. *"I oppose introducing gender-neutral (equal for women and men) compulsory service"* (reverse-coded), and
4. *"Introducing gender-neutral (equal for women and men) compulsory service is an acceptable decision"*.

The third item was reverse-coded before analysis.

EFA results supported a clear unidimensional structure (KMO and Bartlett's test reported in Appendix C9). All four items loaded strongly on a single factor. Internal consistency was excellent, Cronbach's $\alpha = .95$, indicating a highly coherent evaluative construct. A composite PS score was computed as the mean of the four items, with higher scores reflecting greater support for the policy.

2.8.12. Interpersonal Decision Support (IDS) - support for a close woman's voluntary service

Interpersonal Decision Support was measured with a four-item author-developed scale assessing interpersonal behavioural intentions toward a close woman who has chosen to serve voluntarily in the military. Respondents were first asked to imagine a woman close to them who had decided to enlist voluntarily. The items were:

1. *"I would support her decision to serve voluntarily"*,
2. *"I would be willing to help her in connection with her decision to serve"*,
3. *"I would respect her decision to serve, even if I felt very worried about her"*,
4. *"I would try to discourage her from voluntary military service"* (reverse-coded).

The fourth item was reverse-coded so that higher composite scores reflected greater interpersonal support.

EFA results supported a unidimensional structure (KMO and Bartlett's test reported in Appendix C9). All four items loaded substantively on a single factor. Internal consistency was good, Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$. A composite IDS score was computed as the mean of the four items.

Although Interpersonal Decision Support and Policy Support (PS) capture related phenomena, they are empirically distinct: PS captures abstract endorsement of a policy reform, whereas IDS captures personally proximate behavioural intentions. Their moderate bivariate correlation ($r = .46$) is consistent with this conceptual distinction.

2.8.13. Open-ended questions

Three optional open-ended items were included at the end of the questionnaire to capture respondents' own framings in their own words. The items were:

(a) *"What does a fair approach to compulsory military duty for women and men mean to you? Should there, in your view, be equality before the law in this matter?"* (Q49);

(b) *"In your view, what are the main arguments "for" or "against" introducing compulsory military service for women?"* (Q50); and

(c) *"What most strongly shapes your attitude toward military service for women?"* (Q51).

The present study analyses Q49 using qualitative content analysis. Items Q50 and Q51 address adjacent but separate constructs and are reserved for future work.

2.9. Data Cleaning

2.9.1. Exclusion rules

Three exclusion steps were applied sequentially to move from the raw dataset to the final analytic sample. Of the 823 raw responses received at the cut-off, 21 pilot responses collected between 9 and 12 March 2026 were removed because these participants had completed a pre-revision version of the instrument. A further 13 respondents were removed for failing the embedded attention check, with 10 selecting a response other than "4" on Q16 and 3 providing no response to this item. After these exclusions, the final analytic sample comprised $N = 789$ respondents drawn from the main data collection wave.

No additional exclusions were applied on the basis of completion speed, straight-lining, or duplicate IP patterns, because no identifying information was collected and completion time was not distributed with the export. Minor item-level non-response was retained, consistent with the decision to treat survey items as non-mandatory, and was handled through the missing-data procedures described.

2.9.2. Handling missing data

Missing data arose from two sources. The first was item-level non-response, which was modest overall ($N = 787$ valid responses for the military-ties item and $N = 784$ for displacement). The second was missing by design, affecting the contact-quality items through the skip logic in the contact block. Respondents who reported no

interaction with women service members on Q3 were routed past Q3.2-Q3.4 and therefore had no valid values on those items.

Two complementary strategies were applied. For the composite indices of Contact Quantity and Contact Quality, pairwise mean imputation was used at the item level so that respondents who had answered at least one item of a composite could still contribute to the composite score. For the hierarchical regression models in which Contact Quality served as a predictor, listwise deletion was applied. This decision accounts for the reduced sample sizes reported for those specific models in Section 2.11 (N = 546 for the Policy Support model and N = 546 for the Interpersonal Decision Support model). This missing-data strategy was not fully pre-specified in the preregistration and is therefore documented as a minor deviation in Section 2.2.2.

2.9.3. Scale construction and reverse coding

Some survey items were worded negatively and needed to be reverse-coded before analysis. For 7-point scales, scores were converted using the standard formula: new score = 8 – old score (DeVellis, 2017; Field, 2018). This ensured that higher scores always indicated stronger agreement with each construct.

Six items were reverse-coded: three in Social Dominance Orientation, and one each in Contact Quality, Perceived Fairness, Policy Support, and Interpersonal Decision Support. The remaining scales (Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Gender Essentialism, Perceived Danger, and Contact Quantity) contained no reverse-coded items. One item in Modern Sexism was removed entirely because it reduced scale reliability.

Composite scores were calculated as the mean of all items in each scale. No weighting or other transformations were applied. Reliability statistics are provided with each scale description.

2.10. Data Analysis

All statistical analyses were performed in IBM SPSS Statistics and JASP. Descriptive statistics, reliability analyses, bivariate Pearson correlations, and hierarchical multiple regression models were computed in SPSS. Exploratory factor analyses and bootstrapped mediation models were computed in JASP. Full statistical output is provided in the appendices: SPSS output in Appendix C7, JASP mediation output in Appendix C8, and JASP exploratory factor analysis output in Appendix C9. The sections below summarise the operational choices made at each stage.

Descriptive statistics. Means and standard deviations were computed for each composite scale score and for the demographic variables. No transformations were applied to composite scores before analysis.

Factor structure. Exploratory factor analysis was performed on each multi-item scale with four or more items using Principal Axis Factoring. The adequacy of each correlation matrix for factor extraction was evaluated with the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's test of sphericity. A single-factor solution was specified a priori for each scale, consistent with the theoretical unidimensionality of the constructs. Loadings of .40 or higher were treated as substantive (Field, 2018).

Reliability. Cronbach's alpha was computed as the primary index of internal consistency, with $\alpha \geq .70$ treated as acceptable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Corrected item–total correlations were inspected during the reliability analysis of the Modern Sexism scale, leading to the exclusion of one reverse-worded item.

Bivariate correlations. Pearson product-moment correlations were computed between all ten composite scale scores. Correlations were estimated with pairwise deletion of missing values.

Hierarchical OLS regression. Two hierarchical multiple regression models were estimated, one for Policy Support and one for Interpersonal Decision Support. Predictors were entered in the five theoretically ordered blocks. Listwise deletion was applied so that only respondents with complete data on all predictors contributed to each model. Multicollinearity was examined through variance inflation factors (VIFs); all VIFs were below 1.83, well under the conventional threshold of 5, indicating no serious multicollinearity.

Mediation analysis. Bootstrapped mediation analysis was conducted in JASP using maximum likelihood estimation with 5,000 bootstrap resamples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. The model specified Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty as a single mediator linking each of the seven substantive predictors (RWA, SDO, Modern Sexism, Gender Essentialism, Contact Quality, Contact Quantity, Perceived Danger) to Policy Support as the outcome. An indirect effect was treated as statistically significant when its 95% confidence interval did not include zero.

Qualitative content analysis: material and coding frame. The qualitative strand used qualitative content analysis (QCA; Schreier, 2012) to examine the answers to Q49. The material was the set of substantive answers to this item ($n = 534$); blank and off-topic answers had been removed beforehand. Each answer was the unit of coding, and an answer could be assigned more than one category when it expressed more than

one view of fairness. The coding frame was built in a deductive–inductive way (Mayring, 2014). Some categories were defined in advance, based on theoretical accounts of fairness and the research question; others were added from the data when answers did not fit the existing categories. This mix of pre-defined and data-driven categories follows a directed approach to content analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The frame was revised across two rounds, and the final version contained ten categories of fairness construal.

Coding procedure. All coding was done by the author in Taguette, an open-source qualitative analysis tool. Of the 534 substantive answers, 493 (92.3%) were assigned at least one category, producing 826 code applications, or an average of 1.68 codes per coded answer; the remaining 41 answers did not fit any of the ten categories. To keep coding consistent, the analysis used a fixed codebook and a set of written decision rules that separated categories which are easy to confuse. For example, one rule (R3) stated that a statement against compulsion (e.g., "I am against compulsory service") was coded as a preference for voluntary service, not as a rejection of equality; the rejection category was used only for answers that openly refused the idea of equal duty (e.g., "women should not serve"). Finally, the fairness construals were cross-tabulated with policy-support quartiles to build the joint display.

2.11. Results

Reliability and descriptive statistics for all composite scores are summarised in **Table 1**. The full correlation matrix is reported in **Table 2**. Full regression coefficient tables are reported in **Table 3** (Policy Support) and **Table 4** (Interpersonal Decision Support); mediation estimates are reported in **Tables 5a-d**. In the final hierarchical regression model, perceived fairness was the strongest predictor of policy support, while contact quality was positively associated with support and modern sexism and perceived danger were negatively associated with support. Bootstrapped mediation analysis indicated significant indirect effects of gender essentialism and perceived danger on policy support via perceived fairness.

2.11.1. Sample description

The final analytic sample consisted of $N = 789$ Ukrainian adults recruited during the main data collection wave. A detailed description of the sample's demographic, geographic, and military-exposure characteristics is provided in Section 2.4.2 and **Figure 2**.

2.11.2. Scale descriptives and reliability

Means and standard deviations indicated that the ideological and gender-belief variables fell in the low-to-moderate range (Modern Sexism $M = 2.67$, $SD = 1.57$; Social Dominance Orientation $M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.17$; Gender Essentialism $M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.64$), whereas Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Interpersonal Decision Support were elevated (RWA $M = 5.43$, $SD = 1.03$; IDS $M = 5.69$, $SD = 1.46$). Perceived Danger, Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty, and Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty clustered around the midpoint (PD $M = 4.04$, $SD = 1.75$; PF $M = 3.68$, $SD = 1.80$; PS $M = 3.93$, $SD = 2.07$).

Internal consistency was acceptable to excellent across all multi-item composites, with Cronbach's α ranging from .72 (Right-Wing Authoritarianism) to .95 (Policy Support).

Table 1. *Summary of Measures and Reliability*

Variable	No. of questions	Reliability	Notes
Right-Wing Authoritarianism	6	$\alpha = .72$	VSA-6 (Bizumic & Duckitt, 2018)
Social Dominance Orientation	6	$\alpha = .75$	SDO7-short (Ho et al., 2015); 3 items reverse-coded
Modern Sexism	5	$\alpha = .91$	Adapted from Swim et al. (1995); reverse-coded item excluded
Gender Essentialism	4	$\alpha = .87$	Adapted from Skewes et al. (2018)
Contact Frequency	2	$r = .75$	Adapted from intergroup contact literature
Contact Quality	3	$\alpha = .77$	Adapted from intergroup contact literature; 1 item reverse-coded
Perceived Danger	3	$\alpha = .79$	Author-developed
Perceived Fairness	4	$\alpha = .85$	Author-developed; 1 item reverse-coded
Policy Support	4	$\alpha = .95$	Author-developed; 1 item reverse-coded
Interpersonal Decision Support	4	$\alpha = .84$	Author-developed; 1 item reverse-coded

Table 2. Means, Standard Deviations, and Bivariate Correlations Among Study Variables ($N = 789$)

<i>Variable</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	M	SD
1. Contact quality	—	.064	.105*	-.081	-.259***	-.187***	-.026	.080	.162***	.333***	6.07	1.14
2. Contact frequency		—	.094**	.096**	.056	.073*	-.179***	.083*	.161***	.133***	2.79	1.78
3. Right-Wing Authoritarianism			—	.112**	.216***	.325***	-.024	-.146***	-.104**	-.040	5.43	1.04
4. Social Dominance Orientation				—	.222***	.291***	.021	-.037	-.050	-.110**	3.24	1.21
5. Modern Sexism					—	.575***	-.084*	-.057	-.152***	-.354***	2.72	1.59
6. Gender Essentialism						—	.108**	-.224***	-.292***	-.374***	3.75	1.68
7. Perceived Danger							—	-.353***	-.383***	-.230***	3.99	1.76
8. Fairness								—	.783***	.365***	3.70	1.79
9. Policy Support									—	.484***	3.96	2.08
10. Interpersonal Decision Support										—	5.65	1.48

Note. $N = 789$. Values are Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients computed with pairwise deletion. Contact quality items were administered only to respondents reporting prior contact with women service members; correlations involving Contact quality are therefore based on $n = 555$.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

2.11.3. Bivariate correlations

Pearson correlations among the ten composite scores are reported in **Table 2**. Five patterns are noteworthy.

First, the ideological cluster behaved as expected. RWA, SDO, Modern Sexism, and Gender Essentialism were positively intercorrelated, with the strongest association between Modern Sexism and Gender Essentialism, $r = .58, p < .001$. This indicates substantial but incomplete conceptual overlap between these two gender-related constructs.

Second, the two contact indicators showed differentiated associations with the belief variables. Contact Quality was negatively associated with Modern Sexism, $r = -.26, p < .001$, and with Gender Essentialism, $r = -.19, p < .001$. Contact Quantity showed weaker bivariate associations with belief variables but was positively associated with both outcomes (with PS $r = .16, p < .001$; with IDS $r = .13, p < .001$) and negatively associated with Perceived Danger, $r = -.18, p < .001$.

Third, Perceived Danger played a distinct role. It was positively associated with Gender Essentialism, $r = .17, p < .001$, and negatively associated with both Perceived Fairness, $r = -.39, p < .001$, and Policy Support, $r = -.42, p < .001$.

Fourth, Perceived Fairness showed the strongest correlation in the matrix, namely a very strong positive association with Policy Support, $r = .79, p < .001$. Fairness was also moderately positively associated with Interpersonal Decision Support, $r = .34, p < .001$, and negatively associated with RWA and Gender Essentialism.

Fifth, the two outcome variables were moderately positively correlated, $r = .48, p < .001$. This supports the conceptual decision to treat them as related but empirically distinct outcomes.

2.11.4. Hierarchical regression predicting Policy Support

A five-block hierarchical regression predicted Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty ($N = 546$ after listwise deletion). Model fit statistics for each step are reported in **Table 3** (see *Appendix C7* for the full SPSS output).

Table 3. Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty ($N = 546$)

Predictor	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	Step 4 β	Step 5 β
Age	-.09*	-.09*	-.08	-.04	.02
Gender	.18***	.17***	.11*	.13**	.03
Education	.08	.08	.06	.05	.00
Right-Wing Authoritarianism		-.05	.02	-.04	.04
Social Dominance Orientation		-.01	.03	.04	.01
Modern Sexism			.05	.01	-.07
Gender Essentialism			-.27***	-.19***	-.08*
Contact Quality				.10*	.06*
Contact Quantity				.06	.05
Perceived Danger				-.33***	-.10***
Perceived Fairness					.72***
R^2	.049	.052	.098	.219	.654
Adjusted R^2	.044	.043	.086	.205	.647
ΔR^2	.049***	.003	.046***	.122***	.435***
Model F	9.40***	5.93***	8.32***	15.03***	91.92***
df	3, 542	5, 540	7, 538	10, 535	11, 534

Note. $N = 546$ (listwise deletion). Cells show standardized coefficients (β). Gender was coded 1 = woman, 0 = man. Age, gender, and education were sociodemographic controls.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$. *** $p < .001$.

Perceived Fairness contributed most in Step 5, adding 43.5% of the variance on top of the earlier blocks. The final model explained 65.4% of the variance in Policy Support. In the final model, Perceived Fairness was by far the strongest predictor, $\beta = .72$, $p < .001$. Smaller but significant effects were observed for Contact Quality ($\beta = .06$), Gender Essentialism ($\beta = -.08$), and Perceived Danger ($\beta = -.10$). Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, Modern Sexism, Contact Quantity, and the socio-demographic controls were not significant.

2.11.5. Hierarchical regression predicting Interpersonal Decision Support

A parallel hierarchical regression predicted Interpersonal Decision Support ($N = 546$ after listwise deletion). Model fit statistics for each step are reported in **Table 4** (Appendix C7).

Table 4. *Hierarchical Multiple Regression Predicting Interpersonal Decision Support ($N = 546$)*

Predictor	Step 1 β	Step 2 β	Step 3 β	Step 4 β	Step 5 β
Age	-.07	-.08*	-.06	-.04	-.01
Gender	.37***	.37***	.21***	.22***	.19***
Education	.04	.03	.01	.01	-.01
Right-Wing Authoritarianism		.02	.10*	.04	.07
Social Dominance Orientation		-.08	.00	.00	-.01
Modern Sexism			-.17**	-.16**	-.19***
Gender Essentialism			-.20***	-.14**	-.10*
Contact Quality				.21***	.20***
Contact Quantity				.07*	.07*
Perceived Danger				-.20***	-.12**
Perceived Fairness					.26***
R^2	.152	.158	.222	.317	.374
Adjusted R^2	.147	.150	.212	.305	.361
ΔR^2	.152***	.006	.065***	.095***	.056***
Model F	32.26***	20.20***	21.99***	24.89***	28.97***
df	3, 542	5, 540	7, 538	10, 535	11, 534

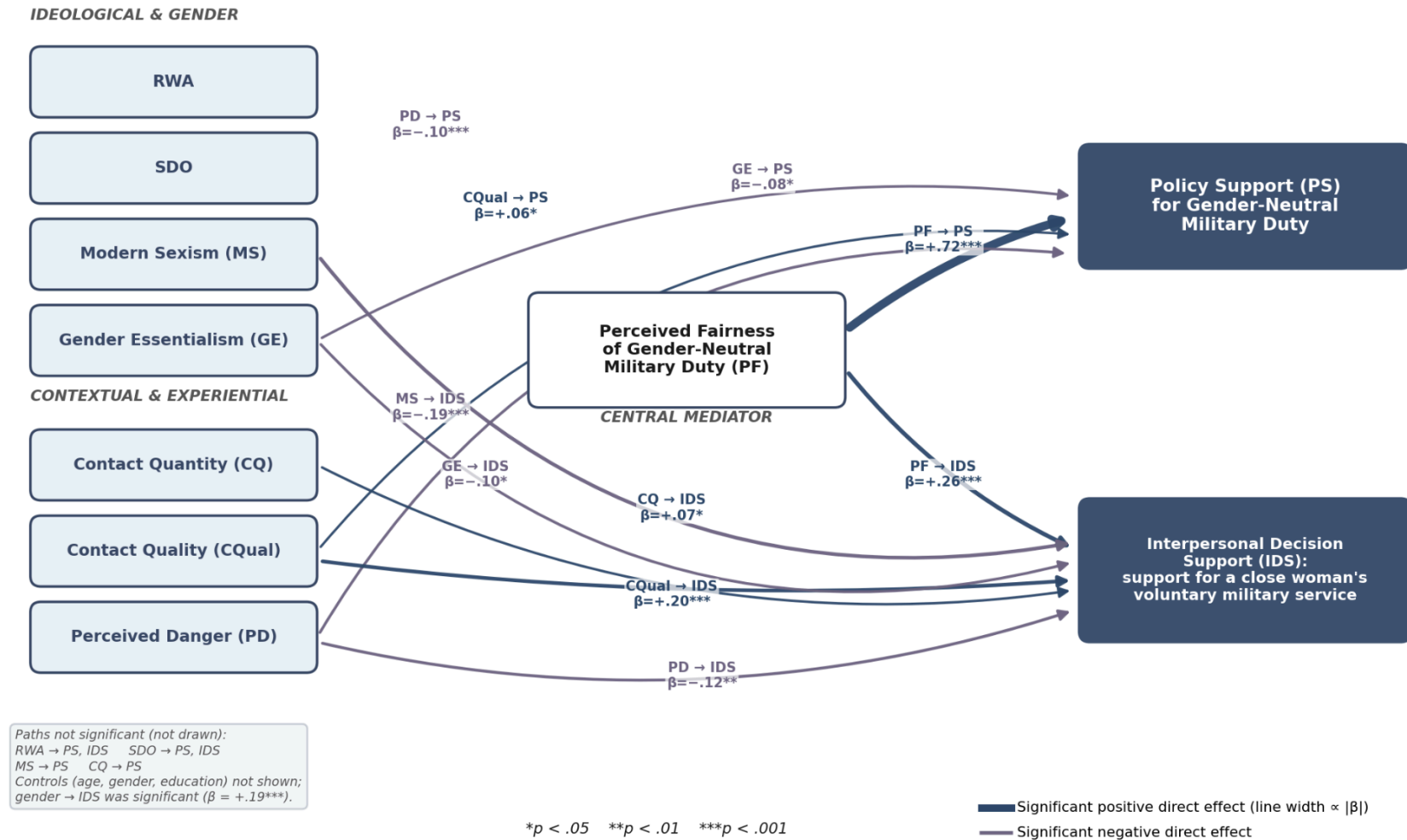
Note. $N = 546$ (listwise deletion). Cells show standardized coefficients (β). Gender was coded 1 = woman, 0 = man. Age, gender, and education were sociodemographic controls.

$*p < .05$. $**p < .01$. $***p < .001$.

Gender-related beliefs (Modern Sexism and Gender Essentialism) contributed most in Step 3, followed by contextual variables in Step 4 and Perceived Fairness in Step 5. The final model explained 37.4% of the variance (adjusted $R^2 = .361$).

In the final model, Contact Quality was the strongest positive predictor and Modern Sexism the strongest negative one. Perceived Fairness, Perceived Danger, and Gender Essentialism were also significant. Right-Wing Authoritarianism was not a significant predictor in the final model. Direct effects are shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. *Empirical Model: Direct Effects of Predictors on Policy Support and Interpersonal Decision Support*



Note. Standardised regression coefficients (β) from final hierarchical regression models predicting PS ($N = 546$) and IDS ($N = 546$). Only significant paths ($p < .05$) are shown. Full coefficient tables are reported in **Table 3** (PS) and **Table 4** (IDS).

2.11.6. Mediation analysis: Perceived Fairness as a mediator of Policy Support

A bootstrapped mediation analysis in JASP tested whether Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty mediated the associations between the seven substantive predictors and Policy Support (H5b). The model was estimated with maximum likelihood and 5,000 bootstrap resamples (bias-corrected 95% CIs). Full parameter estimates are reported in **Table 5a-d** (see Appendix C8 for the full JASP output).

Table 5a. *Direct Effects of Predictors on Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty, Controlling for Perceived Fairness (N = 555)*

Direct effects

							95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
			Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p		
RWA	→	PS	0.035	0.030	1.149	.251	-0.026	0.093
SDO	→	PS	0.010	0.028	0.358	.720	-0.047	0.064
MS	→	PS	-0.083	0.032	-2.559	.010	-0.147	-0.019
GEss	→	PS	-0.080	0.038	-2.095	.036	-0.154	-0.006
CQ	→	PS	0.051	0.028	1.864	.062	-0.004	0.105
CQual	→	PS	0.059	0.027	2.157	.031	0.006	0.113
PD	→	PS	-0.102	0.031	-3.256	.001	-0.165	-0.042

Note. Note. N = 555. Standardized coefficients from a single-mediator model in JASP (ML, 5,000 bootstrap resamples, bias-corrected 95% CIs). Variable labels in the table reflect JASP output; full names are in the List of Abbreviations.

Table 5b. *Indirect Effects of Predictors on Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty via Perceived Fairness (N = 555)*

Indirect effects

									95% Confidence Interval	
									Lower	Upper
					Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p		
RWA	→	PF	→	PS	-0.067	0.033	-2.043	.041	-0.129	-7.235×10 ⁻⁴
SDO	→	PF	→	PS	0.041	0.031	1.306	.191	-0.021	0.101
MS	→	PF	→	PS	0.002	0.038	0.049	.961	-0.070	0.077
GEss	→	PF	→	PS	-0.118	0.040	-2.955	.003	-0.196	-0.040
CQ	→	PF	→	PS	0.008	0.030	0.275	.783	-0.051	0.066
CQual	→	PF	→	PS	0.041	0.030	1.341	.180	-0.018	0.100
PD	→	PF	→	PS	-0.228	0.030	-7.634	< .001	-0.286	-0.170

Note. N = 555. Standardized indirect effects from a single-mediator model estimated in JASP with maximum likelihood and 5,000 bootstrap resamples. An indirect effect is

statistically significant when the bias-corrected 95% confidence interval does not include zero. Variable abbreviations as in Table 5a.

Table 5c. *Total Effects of Predictors on Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty (N = 555)*

Total effects

							95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
			Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p		
RWA	→	PS	-0.033	0.042	-0.783	.434	-0.111	0.055
SDO	→	PS	0.051	0.042	1.201	.230	-0.035	0.132
MS	→	PS	-0.081	0.052	-1.552	.121	-0.181	0.023
GEss	→	PS	-0.198	0.052	-3.809	< .001	-0.296	-0.094
CQ	→	PS	0.060	0.040	1.493	.135	-0.021	0.135
CQual	→	PS	0.099	0.041	2.418	.016	0.017	0.178
PD	→	PS	-0.329	0.040	-8.212	< .001	-0.406	-0.247

Note. N = 555. Total effects represent the sum of direct and indirect effects. Variable abbreviations as in Table 5a.

Table 5d. *Path Coefficients from the Mediation Model Predicting Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty (N = 555)*

Path coefficients

							95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower	Upper
			Std. estimate	Std. error	z-value	p		
PF	→	PS	0.727	0.027	27.39	< .001	0.673	0.778
RWA	→	PS	0.035	0.030	1.149	.251	-0.026	0.093
SDO	→	PS	0.010	0.028	0.358	.720	-0.047	0.064
MS	→	PS	-0.083	0.032	-2.559	.010	-0.147	-0.019
GEss	→	PS	-0.080	0.038	-2.095	.036	-0.154	-0.006
CQ	→	PS	0.051	0.028	1.864	.062	-0.004	0.105
CQual	→	PS	0.059	0.027	2.157	.031	0.006	0.113
PD	→	PS	-0.102	0.031	-3.256	.001	-0.165	-0.042
RWA	→	PF	-0.093	0.045	-2.047	.041	-0.177	-2.896×10 ⁻⁴
SDO	→	PF	0.056	0.043	1.305	.192	-0.029	0.138
MS	→	PF	0.003	0.052	0.049	.961	-0.096	0.106
GEss	→	PF	-0.162	0.054	-2.992	.003	-0.268	-0.055
CQ	→	PF	0.011	0.041	0.275	.783	-0.071	0.091
CQual	→	PF	0.056	0.042	1.341	.180	-0.024	0.136
PD	→	PF	-0.313	0.040	-7.783	< .001	-0.391	-0.232

Note. N = 555. Path coefficients include the mediator-to-outcome path (fairness → Policy) and all predictor-to-mediator paths (predictor → fairness), as well

as predictor-to-outcome paths (identical to direct effects in Table 5a). Variable abbreviations as in Table 5a.

Perceived Fairness was strongly linked to Policy Support ($\beta = .73$, $p < .001$; see Table 5d) where higher fairness perceptions corresponded to greater support for the policy.

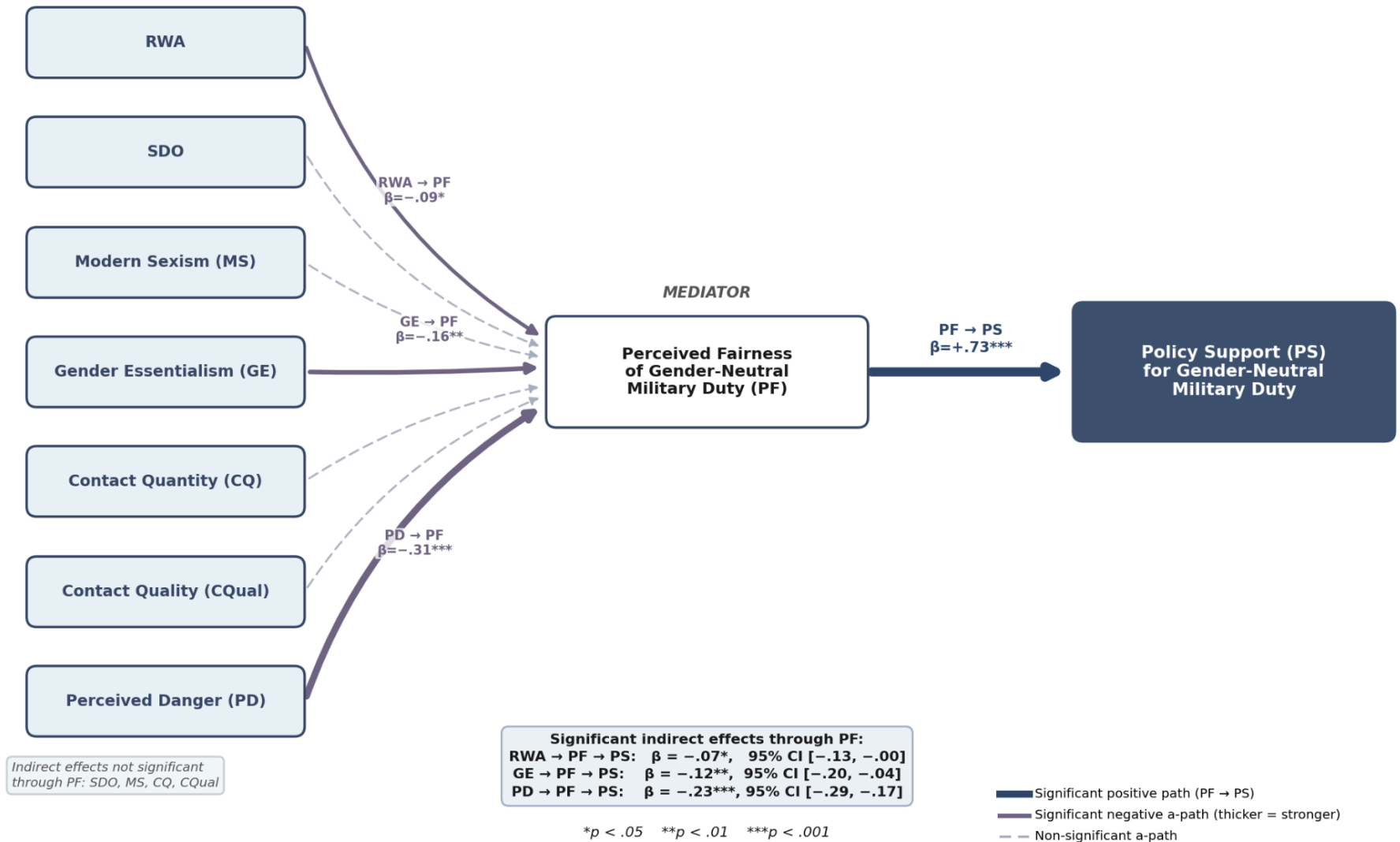
Three predictors had significant indirect effects on Policy Support through Perceived Fairness (Table 5b). These were Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Gender Essentialism, and Perceived Danger. Each one lowered fairness perceptions, which in turn lowered policy support. The effect was strongest for Perceived Danger and weakest for Right-Wing Authoritarianism. For the other four predictors (SDO, Modern Sexism, Contact Quality, and Contact Quantity), the indirect route through fairness was not significant.

Three predictors retained significant direct effects on Policy Support once Perceived Fairness was accounted for: Contact Quality, Gender Essentialism, and Perceived Danger (Table 5a). Perceived Fairness thus explains a substantial part of how these predictors affect Policy Support, but not all of it.

A parallel mediation analysis for Interpersonal Decision Support was not conducted in this thesis and is planned for subsequent research.

The mediation model is visualised in Figure 4, with significant a-paths and the dominant b-path highlighted.

Figure 4 *Mediation Model: Perceived Fairness as Mediator of Policy Support*



Note. Mediation model in JASP with 5,000 bootstrap resamples ($N = 555$). Dashed lines mark non-significant paths. Three indirect paths through Perceived Fairness were significant: Right-Wing Authoritarianism ($\beta = -.07$), Gender Essentialism ($\beta = -.12$), and Perceived Danger ($\beta = -.23$) on Policy Support via Fairness. The direct path from Fairness to Policy Support was $\beta = .73$, $p < .001$.

2.11.7. Interim conclusions

The results gave mixed support for the five hypotheses. Ideological orientations were largely unsupported: neither RWA nor SDO predicted either outcome in the expected negative direction (H1 not supported), and RWA showed a small positive effect on Interpersonal Decision Support.

Gender-related beliefs (H2) operated differently across outcomes: both Modern Sexism and Gender Essentialism were small negative predictors of Policy Support, whereas for Interpersonal Decision Support Modern Sexism was a strong negative predictor and Gender Essentialism a weak one.

For contact, Contact Quality predicted both outcomes positively, more strongly for Interpersonal Decision Support, while Contact Quantity was non-significant (H3a not supported, H3b supported).

Perceived Danger predicted both outcomes negatively (H4 supported). Perceived Fairness was the strongest predictor of Policy Support and a notable predictor of Interpersonal Decision Support (H5a supported), and it mediated the effects of RWA, Gender Essentialism, and Perceived Danger on Policy Support, but not those of SDO, Modern Sexism, or contact (H5b partially supported). Overall, Perceived Fairness is the main, though not the only, evaluative mechanism linking the predictors to Policy Support.

2.11.8. Qualitative content analysis: construals of fairness (Q49)

The qualitative strand analysed the open-ended fairness item (Q49). Of the 534 substantive answers, 493 (92.3%) were assigned at least one of the ten fairness construals. This produced 826 code applications, a mean of 1.68 per answer. The full

distribution is reported in **Table 6**; the codebook and the coded corpus are in Appendix D1.

Table 6. *Distribution of Fairness Construals in Open-Ended Responses to Q49 (n = 493 coded answers)*

#	Construal	Definition	n	%
1	EQUAL_LAW	Fairness as identical legal duty for women and men	248	50.3
2	VOLUNTARY	Fairness as choice: service should stay voluntary for women	115	23.3
3	DIFFERENTIATED	Fair $\neq$ identical; differences make identical duty unfair	114	23.1
4	REJECT	Rejects the equality frame; equal duty should not apply	101	20.5
5	PROTECTIVE	The fair outcome is to shield women, especially mothers	58	11.8
6	CONDITIONAL_CULTURAL	Equal duty is fair only after cultural change (respect, no sexism or corruption)	56	11.4
7	PROCEDURAL	Fairness lies in a fair procedure (screening, selection, transparent rules)	56	11.4
8	CONDITIONAL_MATERIAL	Equal duty is fair only after material readiness (equipment, facilities, guarantees)	42	8.5
9	TRAINING_UNIVERSAL	Universal basic training for all; compulsory service stays voluntary	28	5.7
10	RIGHTS_DUTIES	Equal rights must be matched by equal duties	8	1.6

Note. Percentages are of the 493 coded answers and sum to more than 100% because an answer could receive more than one construal.

The construals fell into three broad logics of fairness.

Fairness as equal treatment. For half of the coded answers, fairness meant the same legal duty for women and men (EQUAL_LAW, 50.3%). These respondents

applied equality before the law directly to conscription and treated identical duty as the fair default: "Equality on this issue at the legislative level is fine, especially in wartime." A small group tied fairness to reciprocity, arguing that equal rights must be matched by equal duties (RIGHTS_DUTIES, 1.6%).

Fairness as accounting for difference. For a large minority, fairness meant treating women and men differently rather than identically. Three construals shared this logic. DIFFERENTIATED answers (23.1%) held that biological or social differences make identical duty unfair in itself; for them, equal treatment is not the same as fair treatment: "Formally it can be so, but in fact, equality is impossible because of biological difference." VOLUNTARY answers (23.3%) located fairness in choice: service should remain optional for women even if compulsory for men. This is a position inside the debate, not a refusal of it: "For women this should be a choice, not an obligation." PROTECTIVE answers (11.8%) defined the fair outcome as shielding women, especially mothers, from compulsory service: "If a woman has children, who will look after them?"

Fairness as a precondition or procedure. A third group accepted equal duty only under certain conditions, or saw fairness as a matter of procedure. CONDITIONAL_MATERIAL answers (8.5%) accepted equal duty only if material conditions were met first, such as fitted equipment, facilities, and demobilisation guarantees: "There should be equality, with appropriate guarantees and provision." CONDITIONAL_CULTURAL answers (11.4%) made it conditional on cultural change first, such as respect for women and an end to sexism and corruption. PROCEDURAL answers (11.4%) located fairness in a fair process — medical screening, transparent selection, or a foreign model such as Israel: "I am for an individual approach, interviews, and an adequate attitude from the state." TRAINING_UNIVERSAL answers (5.7%) proposed a hybrid: universal basic military training for everyone, while keeping actual service voluntary.

Rejection of the frame. Finally, one in five coded answers rejected the equality frame itself (REJECT, 20.5%). These respondents denied that equal duty should apply at all, rather than offering a different version of fairness: "I do not consider such an approach fair." Answers that opposed only compulsion, but not equality as such, were coded VOLUNTARY rather than REJECT, since opposing compulsion is not the same as rejecting equality (see Section 2.10 and Appendix D1 for the coding rules).

The construals show that respondents do not work with a single idea of fairness. Respondents filled the same evaluative term with at least three distinct logics: equality as sameness, equality as difference, and conditional or procedural fairness.

Finally, the construals were cross-tabulated against Policy Support quartiles to integrate the qualitative and quantitative strands (Table 7).

Table 7. *Joint Display: Fairness Construals by Policy Support Quartile (n = 493)*

Construal	PS-Q1 (lowest)	PS-Q2	PS-Q3	PS-Q4 (highest)	Total	M PS
EQUAL_LAW	13 (5%)	40 (16%)	84 (34%)	111 (45%)	248	5.43
PROCEDURAL	6 (11%)	10 (18%)	20 (36%)	20 (36%)	56	5.02
TRAINING_UNIVERSAL	1 (4%)	9 (32%)	9 (32%)	9 (32%)	28	4.78
RIGHTS_DUTIES	1 (12%)	3 (38%)	1 (12%)	3 (38%)	8	4.50
CONDITIONAL_MATERIAL	7 (17%)	7 (17%)	23 (55%)	5 (12%)	42	4.48
PROTECTIVE	15 (26%)	13 (22%)	16 (28%)	14 (24%)	58	4.18
CONDITIONAL_CULTURAL	16 (29%)	13 (23%)	14 (25%)	13 (23%)	56	4.03
DIFFERENTIATED	29 (25%)	34 (30%)	33 (29%)	18 (16%)	114	3.86
VOLUNTARY	54 (47%)	38 (33%)	12 (10%)	11 (10%)	115	2.89
REJECT	62 (61%)	34 (34%)	5 (5%)	0 (0%)	101	1.99
Total responses (n)	124	123	123	123	493	

Note. N = 493 responses that received at least one fairness construal and had a valid Policy Support (PS) score. PS quartiles: PS-Q1 = 1.00–2.25 (n = 124), PS-Q2 = 2.25–4.25 (n = 123), PS-Q3 = 4.25–6.00 (n = 123), PS-Q4 = 6.00–7.00 (n = 123); tied boundary scores were split across adjacent quartiles by rank. Cell entries are counts, with the row percentage (share of that construal falling in the quartile) in parentheses; rows sum to 100% across quartiles. M PS = mean Policy Support among respondents giving that construal (1–7 scale). Because an answer could receive more than one construal, construal counts within a column exceed the number of distinct responses shown in the bottom row.

The construals aligned systematically with the quantitative support dimension. Respondents who construed fairness as an identical legal duty clustered in the upper quartiles (EQUAL_LAW, 45% in PS-Q4, M PS = 5.43), as did those who framed fairness procedurally (PROCEDURAL, M PS = 5.02). At the opposite pole, respondents who rejected the equality frame were concentrated in the lowest quartile and absent from the highest (REJECT, 61% in PS-Q1, M PS = 1.99), and those who located fairness in women's free choice were similarly low (VOLUNTARY, 47% in PS-Q1, M PS = 2.89). Difference-sensitive and conditional construals occupied the middle of the distribution

and cut across quartiles rather than clustering at either pole (DIFFERENTIATED, M PS = 3.86; CONDITIONAL_CULTURAL, 4.03; PROTECTIVE, 4.18; CONDITIONAL_MATERIAL, 4.48). The monotonic gradient from REJECT to EQUAL_LAW indicates that the verbal construals and the closed-ended support measure track the same underlying evaluation, which supports the coherence of the mixed-methods integration.

CHAPTER 3. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. Summary of Key Findings

The study tested a socio-psychological model of two outcomes, Policy Support for Gender-Neutral Military Duty and Interpersonal Decision Support, with Perceived Fairness positioned as the central mediator.

Perceived Fairness emerged as the strongest predictor in both models. In the Policy Support model, it added the largest share of explained variance ($\Delta R^2 = .435$) and remained the strongest predictor in the final step ($\beta = .72$, $p < .001$). In the Interpersonal Decision Support model, its effect was smaller but still significant ($\beta = .26$, $p < .001$). These results support H5a.

The two outcomes relied on partially different sets of predictors. Policy Support was almost entirely explained by Perceived Fairness, with only small additional effects from Contact Quality, Modern Sexism, Gender Essentialism, and Perceived Danger. Interpersonal Decision Support depended on a wider set. Contact Quality was the strongest positive predictor ($\beta = .20$), Modern Sexism the strongest negative one ($\beta = -.19$), Perceived Danger also lowered support ($\beta = -.12$), and Gender Essentialism contributed a small negative effect ($\beta = -.10$). Right-Wing Authoritarianism was not a significant predictor of Interpersonal Decision Support in the final model.

The pattern fits the distinction made in Section 1.2.3 between abstract policy attitudes and personally proximate reactions. Supporting a policy in principle is not the same as supporting a specific close woman who decides to serve.

Perceived Fairness mediated only some of the effects on Policy Support. The indirect effects of Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Gender Essentialism, and Perceived Danger were significant; those of SDO, Modern Sexism, and the two contact variables were not. Perceived Danger produced the strongest mediated effect. In other words, concerns about risk mainly shape policy attitudes by making the policy seem less fair.

Fairness, on this evidence, is the main evaluative mechanism behind attitudes toward gender-neutral military duty, though not the only one. Contact quality and broader gender and ideological beliefs also act directly, especially when the question shifts from policy in the abstract to a specific woman close to the respondent.

Qualitatively, the same fairness construct proved internally heterogeneous: respondents who supported the policy construed fairness as equal legal duty, whereas

those who opposed it used the same term to defend difference or free choice, with construals forming a clear gradient from REJECT (M PS = 1.99) to EQUAL_LAW (M PS = 5.43).

3.2. Interpretation and Theoretical Implications

3.2.1. Perceived Fairness as a Central but Not Universal Mechanism

The dominant position of Perceived Fairness in the Policy Support model confirms a long-standing claim in the legitimacy literature. Citizens evaluate contested policies by asking whether those policies are fair (Tyler, 2006; Tyran & Feld, 2001). When a policy reform reshapes a gendered institution as fundamental as military conscription, fairness perceptions carry most of the evaluative weight. This is consistent with Herian et al. (2012). They showed that fairness cues dominate evaluations of contested policies when citizens lack detailed institutional knowledge.

The pattern is weaker for Interpersonal Decision Support. Perceived Fairness still predicts interpersonal support for a close woman's voluntary service. However, several other variables predict it just as strongly or more so. This suggests that fairness judgments matter most for abstract, policy-level attitudes. Personally proximate responses involve a broader set of concerns. These include emotional attachment, anticipatory worry, and prior experience with women who serve.

3.2.2. Why Fairness Mediates Only Some Upstream Effects

The mediation analysis revealed a selective pattern. Perceived Fairness transmitted the effects of Gender Essentialism and Perceived Danger on Policy Support, but not the effects of authoritarianism, dominance orientation, modern sexism, or contact. The pattern is theoretically informative rather than anomalous.

Gender Essentialism and Perceived Danger both concern the policy object itself. Someone who believes that men and women differ in essential ways is likely to see gender-neutral duty as a category error; someone who believes military service is especially dangerous for women is likely to see equal conscription as imposing disproportionate risk. Both beliefs shape fairness evaluations directly, because both speak to whether the policy treats its targets appropriately.

Right-Wing Authoritarianism, Social Dominance Orientation, and Modern Sexism are broader orientations, concerning how a person views hierarchy, group relations, or gender more generally. Their effects on Policy Support, where present, appear to work through routes other than fairness. Intergroup contact reflects accumulated personal

experience rather than an evaluative judgement about the policy, so its effects surface most strongly in the interpersonal domain of Interpersonal Decision Support.

Among the significant indirect effects, Perceived Danger produced the strongest mediated pathway. Protective concerns about women's military service are the main upstream driver of reduced fairness perceptions, and through reduced fairness these concerns lower policy support. In the Ukrainian wartime context, this is a policy-relevant finding: citizens who fear women at war do not simply oppose equal duty, they construct it as unfair.

3.2.3. The Positive Effect of Right-Wing Authoritarianism on Interpersonal Decision Support

The regression model predicting Interpersonal Decision Support produced a result contrary to H1a. Right-Wing Authoritarianism was not a significant predictor of Interpersonal Decision Support in the final model.

A statistical suppression effect is the most plausible interpretation. In the bivariate correlation, the association between Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Interpersonal Decision Support was weak and non-significant. The positive coefficient emerges only after Modern Sexism and Gender Essentialism are controlled. Because authoritarianism shares variance with the sexism-essentialism cluster, and that shared variance carries a negative component of the authoritarianism-outcome relationship, what remains of authoritarianism once the shared variance is partialled out reflects something different.

The remaining component can be interpreted substantively. Stripped of its sexist and essentialist content, authoritarianism captures deference to legitimate authority, conformity to in-group norms, and support for those who serve the collective. In wartime Ukraine, voluntary military service is a strongly valued in-group norm. So a person whose authoritarianism is not tied to gender-traditional beliefs may support a close woman who has chosen to serve. Her decision aligns with a valued in-group norm. This interpretation is speculative and requires replication, but it fits a broader pattern in the literature: once the correlated beliefs of authoritarianism are held constant, its effects become direction-dependent rather than uniformly negative.

3.2.4. Contact Quality but Not Contact Quantity

Hypothesis H3 predicted that intergroup contact with women service members would be positively associated with both outcomes. The results supported this only for Contact Quality; Contact Quantity was not a significant predictor in either final model.

The pattern is consistent with contemporary contact theory. Early formulations emphasised frequency of exposure (Allport, 1954); later work clarified that the quality

of contact drives attitude change, rather than mere exposure (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). In the Ukrainian wartime context, contact with women service members is widely distributed, and many respondents have relatives, friends, or acquaintances who serve. Quantity therefore has limited discriminating power, while quality captures the meaningful variation in whether interactions are positive, cooperative, and respectful.

The direct effect of Contact Quality on Interpersonal Decision Support was larger than its effect on Policy Support. Contact shapes the interpersonal response more strongly than the policy response, which is plausible – personal experience with women who serve informs how one responds to another close woman who might serve more directly than it informs abstract policy endorsement.

3.2.5. Divergence Between Policy Support and Interpersonal Decision Support

The two outcomes are moderately correlated ($r = .46$) but rest on partially different predictors. Policy Support is an abstract evaluative judgement whose primary determinant is fairness. Interpersonal Decision Support is a personally proximate response whose primary determinants are the quality of prior contact and the respondent's broader gender attitudes.

This divergence supports the ambivalence argument developed in Section 1.2.3. Citizens can endorse a policy in principle while still discouraging a specific close woman from enacting it, or vice versa. The two levels of attitude are empirically distinct and theoretically separable. Future work on gender and military service in Ukraine should not treat these outcomes as interchangeable indicators of the same underlying attitude.

3.2.6. What Fairness Means: Qualitative Elaboration of H5a

The joint display clarifies why perceived fairness is such a strong yet not exhaustive predictor of policy support. The same word — fairness — maps onto opposite policy positions depending on the construal that respondents apply. For high supporters it means identical legal duty (EQUAL_LAW); for low supporters the same term justifies either rejecting equal duty outright (REJECT) or preserving women's free choice (VOLUNTARY). A substantial middle group construes fairness as difference-sensitive or conditional and is distributed across the support range. This analysis gives qualitative content to the two significant indirect paths in the mediation model: the difference-based construals (DIFFERENTIATED, PROTECTIVE) are the verbal expression of the beliefs captured quantitatively by Gender Essentialism and Perceived Danger, both of which lowered policy support by lowering perceived fairness.

3.3. Practical Recommendations (Policy and Communication)

The findings of this study have clear implications for how Ukraine can communicate, legitimise, and implement policies on women's military participation.

3.3.1. Put Fairness at the Centre of Policy Communication

Perceived Fairness was the strongest predictor of Policy Support, which indicates that citizens evaluate gender-neutral military duty primarily through the question of whether it is fair. Public messaging about this policy should therefore lead with fairness, rather than with arguments framed around security needs or personnel shortages.

Several practical points follow. Official communications from the Ministry of Defence and civic campaigns should frame gender-neutral duty as a logical consequence of equal rights. A pragmatic frame, "We need more personnel", bypasses the fairness mechanism that actually drives support, whereas an equal-rights frame engages it directly.

Communication should also respond to the specific concerns that lower fairness perceptions. The mediation analysis indicates that these concerns come mainly from two sources: essentialist beliefs about gender differences and worries about physical risk to women. Messages that ignore these sources are less likely to shift fairness perceptions and therefore less likely to shift support.

Most citizens do not follow military policy in detail. In the absence of specialised knowledge, fairness serves as a shortcut for policy evaluation. Communicators should treat that shortcut as a deliberate tool rather than an accidental one.

3.3.2. Speak Directly to Danger Concerns

Perceived Danger produced the strongest indirect effect on Policy Support through reduced fairness, and it also predicted both outcomes directly. Danger concerns cannot be dismissed as irrational, because many of them reflect real features of the wartime context. Communication should therefore engage these concerns rather than try to bypass them.

Credible messaging acknowledges the reality of risk and then explains how training, equipment, and deployment decisions help manage that risk. A message that simply denies danger will lose credibility with citizens who know the war at close range.

Visible stories of well-trained women with agency over their service can also reframe the understanding of risk. Such stories do not deny that service is dangerous; they show that women bear this danger competently, professionally, and by choice.

3.3.3. Invest in the Quality of Contact, Not Just the Quantity

Contact Quality predicted both outcomes, whereas Contact Quantity did not. Simply knowing a woman who serves does not, on its own, increase support. What matters is the nature of the interaction, whether it is respectful, cooperative, and substantive.

Several implications follow for practice. When military units host civilian visits, press events, or educational activities, interactions with women service members should be substantive rather than ceremonial. Brief scripted meetings are unlikely to change attitudes, while extended cooperative exchanges are more likely to do so.

Veterans' organisations and civic groups that bring women service members into contact with civilian audiences should design their formats to support equal-status interactions. Such formats align with the Allport conditions that contact theory identifies as necessary for attitude change (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006).

Recruitment campaigns that rely on exposure to women service members should also design that exposure with care. Images and narratives that present women as competent and integrated into unit life will activate the contact-quality mechanism; images that present women as tokens or exceptions will not.

3.3.4. Treat Policy Attitudes and Personal Responses as Distinct

Policy Support and Interpersonal Decision Support were moderately correlated, but they rested on partially different predictors. This distinction matters both for how policies are designed and for how their public reception is evaluated. Two recommendations follow.

First, policymakers should not assume that public support for a policy in the abstract guarantees support within families. A reform that receives broad public support may still encounter resistance when a specific close woman is involved. Policy rollout should anticipate this gap, rather than treat it as a surprise.

Second, researchers and survey practitioners who evaluate public attitudes toward women's military participation should measure both levels of attitude. A single abstract policy item will miss important variation between what people endorse in principle and what they support in practice. The two constructs should be reported separately and interpreted independently.

3.3.5. Engage Gender Essentialism Through Civic Education

Gender Essentialism reduced Policy Support both directly and indirectly through lowered fairness perceptions. Modern Sexism was the strongest negative predictor of

Interpersonal Decision Support. Together, these findings indicate that beliefs about essential gender differences remain a substantial obstacle to support for gender-neutral military duty.

Civic education can engage these beliefs through three complementary approaches. The first is to present evidence of women's competence in military roles. The second is to explain the difference between average differences between groups and the abilities of individual people. The third is sharing personal stories that contradict essentialist assumptions.

These beliefs also operate partly through fairness perceptions. Weakening them through education should therefore also strengthen perceptions of fairness. Such changes, in turn, should improve policy support.

3.3.6. Reform First, Then Communicate

The qualitative results show that fairness is often a conditional verdict, not a simple yes. Half of the coded respondents endorsed equal duty as fair in itself (EQUAL_LAW, 50.3%), but an almost equal share (51.7%) framed fairness with a condition or a caveat, and the two groups overlap. Even among the 248 respondents who said equal legal duty is fair, about 30% added a concrete condition. The conditions they named most often were material readiness (proper equipment and a uniform designed for women), cultural change (respect for women and an end to sexism and corruption), fair selection procedures, and a more equal sharing of family duties such as childcare.

This evidence points to a real limit of communication. A message that describes equal duty as fair will not convince these respondents if the conditions they name remain unmet. For them, fairness depends on the system itself, not on how it is described. The task is therefore substantive, not only communicative. Before or alongside any public campaign, the state would need to reform military service in the directions respondents raise. These include equipment and uniforms designed for women, clear and equal rules on the length of service and demobilisation, a more equal sharing of family and childcare duties between women and men, and a transparent selection process that is free of corruption. In short, reform should come first and communication second; a fairness message without these reforms is likely to fail.

Rejection was rarely a blank refusal. Of the 101 respondents who rejected equal duty, about half (54) also explained why, and their reasons fell under other construals:

- 23 said service should stay a matter of choice for women, not an obligation;
- 19 pointed to differences between women and men;

- 13 wanted to protect women, especially mothers, and asked who would care for the children;
- A smaller group rejected equal duty only under current conditions, citing disrespect, corruption, or a lack of proper equipment.

Some answers gave more than one reason, so these numbers overlap.

These reasons fall into two groups. The first group is about conditions that reform can change, such as equipment and uniforms, the length of service, the sharing of childcare and family duties, respect for women, and the level of corruption. If the state fixed these, some of this rejection could soften. The second group is about fixed beliefs in physical or biological difference. Reform and a fairness message are unlikely to change these views, and they set the real limit of public support. The practical point stays the same. Specific reforms should come first, because part of the opposition is not a firm no but a list of unmet conditions.

3.3.7. Summary

The practical recommendations derived from this study form a coherent strategy. Lead with fairness. Engage danger concerns substantively rather than dismissing them. Invest in the quality of intergroup contact, not only in its quantity. Recognise that policy-level and personal-level attitudes rest on partially different foundations. Engage essentialist beliefs through civic education.

3.4. Limitations

3.4.1. Sample Composition and Representativeness

The sample of 789 Ukrainian adults was recruited online through social media and snowball sampling. It differs from the adult population of Ukraine in five ways.

1. Women make up 67.8% of the sample. The national gender split is closer to even.
2. 80.7% of respondents hold a higher education degree, compared with around half of Ukraine's working-age population (OECD, 2023).
3. The sample is strongly urban. 89.4% of respondents live in cities, and 53.6% live in cities of 500,000 people or more. The national urban share is 70.3% (World Bank, 2024).
4. The regional distribution is uneven. 42.4% of respondents live in the North (including Kyiv) and 32.4% in the West. The East, South, and Centre are under-represented relative to their share of the population.
5. Respondents have far closer ties to the military than the general population. 21.7% currently serve in the Armed Forces of Ukraine, and 74.1% have family members

or close friends who served. Both figures are well above national levels. This likely reflects the recruitment channels used, which included the social media accounts of a serving servicewoman, a veteran, and a military psychologist

3.4.2. Non-Probability Design

The sample was recruited through non-probability methods (convenience and snowball sampling). This design does not support formal statistical inference to the Ukrainian adult population. Standard errors, confidence intervals, and significance tests in the present study reflect variability within the sample rather than uncertainty about a probabilistically defined population.

This limitation is inherent to most online research conducted in Ukraine during the current wartime context, where probability sampling frames are not practicable. These results show how psychological factors influence attitudes in this study, not precise estimates for the entire Ukrainian population. Replication in samples drawn through different recruitment strategies would strengthen confidence in the observed patterns.

3.4.3. Cross-Sectional Design and Causal Inference

The data were collected at a single point. All analyses are therefore cross-sectional. This design cannot establish the temporal order of the associations between variables, and it cannot rule out reverse causation.

The mediation analysis in particular requires caution. A statistical mediation model can show that data are consistent with a hypothesised pathway, but it cannot prove that the pathway is causal. Alternative models with different variable orderings may fit the data equally well. The causal interpretation of mediation in Section 3.2.2 therefore relies on theoretical reasoning rather than on design-based evidence. Longitudinal or experimental studies would be needed to test the proposed causal direction.

3.4.4. Self-Report Measurement and Social Desirability

All study variables were measured through self-report. Self-report is an appropriate method for the constructs of interest, because policy attitudes, perceived fairness, and ideological orientations are by definition subjective judgements. However, self-report introduces known risks.

One risk is social desirability bias. Respondents may have adjusted their answers toward what they perceived as socially acceptable, particularly in a wartime context where public discourse about women in the military is emotionally charged. A second

risk is common method variance. When all variables are measured using the same method (self-report on the same online questionnaire), correlations between them can be inflated. The present study did not include a method-variance correction such as a marker variable, which limits the ability to estimate the size of this inflation. Future research using mixed measurement sources (for example, behavioural indicators or informant reports) could address this limitation.

3.4.5. The Wartime Context

The data were collected during an active full-scale war. This context is a defining feature of the study and also a limitation on its generalisability over time. The immediate reality of casualties, mobilisation pressures, and visible women's participation in the Armed Forces of Ukraine shapes attitudes toward gender-neutral military duty. The relative weights of the predictors observed here may shift once the wartime context changes.

Perceived Danger, in particular, is likely to operate differently in peacetime than in wartime. The same is true of Contact Quality: in wartime, contact with women service members is far more widespread than it would be in peacetime Ukraine. The findings should therefore be read as specific to the 2026 wartime context, with the understanding that the underlying mechanisms may generalise even if specific parameter estimates do not.

3.4.6. Measurement of Author-Developed Scales

Three of the scales used in this study (Perceived Danger, Perceived Fairness, and Policy Support, as well as Interpersonal Decision Support) were author-developed for this research. Although their psychometric properties were acceptable in the present sample (internal consistency, unidimensional structure), they have not been validated in independent samples. Future research should replicate the factor structure and reliability of these scales in different populations, and where possible, compare them with established measures of related constructs.

3.4.7. Deferred Analytic Components

Three analytic components from the preregistered plan were not completed in this thesis. These are the moderation models, the additional robustness checks (gender-stratified analyses and a sensitivity analysis excluding Perceived Danger), and the content analysis of the two remaining open-ended items (Q50 and Q51). These components are reserved for a subsequent research article. Their absence means that the present findings are based on the primary hierarchical and mediation models only. As a

result, the limits of these findings have not yet been fully mapped. It remains to be established whether they hold across different subgroups (such as by gender or age) and whether they are confirmed by alternative statistical models.

3.4.8. Single-Coder Qualitative Analysis

The qualitative coding was done by a single coder, and no separate inter-coder or intra-coder reliability coefficient (such as Cohen's κ) was computed, owing to the project timeline. Coding consistency was instead supported by a fixed codebook (Appendix D1) and explicit written decision rules, which reduce subjective variation in category assignment. Even so, the absence of a formal reliability check means the coding reflects one coder's judgement, and an independent second coder is a clear priority for future work.

3.5. Directions for Future Research

This thesis already had a qualitative part. It looked at how people explained fairness in their words, using their answers to the first open question (Q49). The survey also included two more open questions, but this thesis did not analyse them. One asked why people support or oppose gender-neutral military duty (Q50). The other asked what shapes their views (Q51). The clearest next step is to analyse these two questions using the same content analysis method.

This new analysis would do two things that the Q49 coding could not. First, it would show the exact arguments and worries behind the survey scores on policy support. Second, it would show what people say has shaped their views, such as personal experience or culture, which the scales did not measure. The two kinds of data could then work together, so the words explain the numbers instead of just sitting next to them.

A second priority is about method. In this thesis, one person did all the coding. A second, independent coder should code the Q49 answers again, and the two codings should be compared with a reliability measure. The scales made for this study (Perceived Danger, Perceived Fairness, Policy Support, and Interpersonal Decision Support) should also be tested in other samples before we treat them as fully reliable.

Finally, the design can be strengthened. The planned moderation models and extra checks (separate analyses for women and men, and one analysis without perceived danger) are still to be done. They would show whether the fairness effect works the same way in different groups. This study is cross-sectional, so it cannot prove what causes what. Long-term and experimental studies with samples that better represent the

Ukrainian population would support stronger causal claims and make the results easier to generalise.

3.6. Final Conclusion

This thesis set out to identify the socio-psychological factors that shape Ukrainians' attitudes toward national policies on women's participation in the security sector. It addressed this question through a confirmatory, preregistered, cross-sectional survey of 789 adult respondents, grounded in a mixed-methods design and guided by five hypotheses.

The findings support a single central claim: Perceived Fairness of Gender-Neutral Military Duty functions as the dominant evaluative mechanism for abstract policy support, and as a meaningful contributor to interpersonal responses toward close women who serve. Citizens who see gender-neutral military duty as fair support both the policy and the women who enact it in their lives. Those who see it as unfair withdraw support at both levels.

Perceived Fairness does not operate in isolation. It carries the effects of two upstream sources in particular – essentialist beliefs about gender difference and protective concerns about physical risk to women – both of which reduce fairness perceptions, which in turn reduce policy support. Other influences, such as the quality of personal contact with women service members, operate directly rather than through fairness. Ideological orientations, contrary to standard predictions, exert only limited direct effects in this wartime context.

These findings contribute to the social-psychological literature on gendered policy attitudes in two ways. They establish Perceived Fairness as a central mediator for policy-level attitudes while also identifying the boundaries of that mediation. And they show that policy-level and interpersonally proximate responses, though correlated, rest on partially different psychological foundations. This distinction matters for both theory and practice.

For Ukraine, the findings translate into a clear communication priority. Public messaging about gender-neutral military duty should lead with fairness and engage danger concerns substantively, and invest in the quality of contact between citizens and women service members.

This study is, however, an initial step. The present thesis is part of a larger research programme, and several preregistered components (content analysis of the two remaining open-ended items, moderation models, and additional robustness checks) are reserved for a subsequent research article. Further work in the form of longitudinal and

experimental designs as well as more representative samples will strengthen the causal interpretation of the mechanisms identified here. The question of how Ukrainians evaluate national policies on women's military participation holds significant importance and is closely tied to the country's ongoing defence and democratic development, making it insufficient to rely on a single study.

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AI USE ACKNOWLEDGMENT

In the preparation of this thesis, AI tools were used in accordance with the guidelines of the Kyiv School of Economics. The author reviewed, edited, and verified all AI-assisted outputs and takes full responsibility for the final content.

- **Notion AI** (Notion): supporting the literature search, organising research notes, and checking APA formatting.
- **Claude** (Anthropic): visualising Figures 1–4 based on the author's conceptual model and results; assisting with the development of the qualitative coding frame, with all coding decisions reviewed and finalised by the author; assisting with data cleaning and the preparation of data and appendix files.
- **DeepL** (DeepL SE) was used to assist in comprehending foreign-language sources.
- **Grammarly (Grammarly Inc.)** was used for grammar and spell checking.

The research design, the statistical analyses, the interpretation of the results, and the final conclusions are the author's own.

APPENDICES

Appendix A. Survey Materials

Appendix B. Research ethics and instrument development (procedural materials)

B1. Ethics application (incl. informed consent, full questionnaire, and research project proposal) – *Appendix_B1_Ethics_Application.pdf*

B2. Ethics committee approval (NPA Protocol No. 4/26) – *Appendix_B2_Ethics_Committee_Approval.pdf*

B3. Questionnaire revisions / instrument evolution – *Appendix_B3_Questionnaire_Revisions.pdf*

Appendix C. Empirical data and statistical analysis (quantitative materials)

C1. Raw (pre-cleaning) responses – *Appendix_C1_raw_responses_N823.xlsx*

C2. Cleaned data for SPSS – *Appendix_C2_data_N789_spss.sav*

C3. Cleaned data for JASP – *Appendix_C3_data_N789_jasp.csv*

C4. Item-level data for EFA – *Appendix_C4_items_for_EFA_N789.csv*

C5. SPSS analysis syntax – *Appendix_C5_SPSS_analysis_syntax.sps*

C6. SPSS output (viewer file) – *Appendix_C6_SPSS_output_thesis.spv*

C7. SPSS output (PDF) – *Appendix_C7_SPSS_Output_N789.pdf*

C8. JASP output, mediation analysis (PDF) – *Appendix_C8_JASP_output_mediation_N789.pdf*

C9. JASP output, EFA (PDF) – *Appendix_C9_JASP_output_EFA_N789.pdf*

Appendix D. Qualitative Analysis Materials

D1. Codebook, decision rules, codebook development, and coded corpus (Q49) – *Appendix_D1_Qualitative_Analysis_Materials.pdf*

D2. Taguette coding export (highlights and tags) – *Appendix_D2_all_tags.xlsx*