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Ethics, empathy, and social responsibility in educational activities during martial law

Ética, empatia e responsabilidade social em atividades educacionais durante a lei marcial

Ética, empatía y responsabilidad social en las actividades educativas durante la ley marcial

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Abstract
The complex communicative nature of the educational environment requires teachers to demonstrate ethical competence, empathy, and social responsibility, especially under martial law. Respect for cultural identity, self-awareness, and effective interpersonal communication are essential for maintaining a supportive educational process during wartime. The purpose of the article is to analyze the formation and development of teachers' ethics, empathy, and social responsibility in conditions of martial law. The study examines pedagogical ethics as an internal resource for addressing psychological and pedagogical challenges in wartime. The findings indicate that ethics and empathy serve as important tools for providing emotional and psychological support, motivating participants

in the educational process, and developing assertive communication. It is established that teachers' social responsibility and ethical behavior contribute to stress resistance, resilience, tolerance, pedagogical tact, and emotional self-regulation among participants in the educational process. The article also highlights key psychological, pedagogical, and managerial practices of an emotional and ethical nature. It is argued that teachers' normative ethics regulate moral interaction in society, while wartime professional ethics should prioritize humanism, empathy, and responsibility for educational outcomes.

Keywords
Ethical Competence, Pedagogical Ethics, Ethical Reputation, Communication, Art Pedagogy.

Resumo
A natureza comunicativa complexa do ambiente educacional exige que os professores demonstrem competência ética, empatia e responsabilidade social, especialmente sob a vigência da lei marcial. O respeito à identidade cultural, a autoconsciência e a comunicação interpessoal eficaz são essenciais para manter um processo educacional acolhedor em tempos de guerra. O objetivo deste artigo é analisar a formação e o desenvolvimento da ética, da empatia e da responsabilidade social dos professores em condições de lei marcial. O estudo examina a ética pedagógica como um recurso interno para enfrentar desafios psicológicos e pedagógicos em tempos de guerra. Os resultados indicam que a ética e a empatia servem como ferramentas importantes para oferecer apoio emocional e psicológico, motivar os participantes do processo educacional e desenvolver uma comunicação assertiva. Constata-se que a responsabilidade social e o comportamento ético dos professores contribuem para a resistência ao estresse, a resiliência, a tolerância, o tato pedagógico e a autorregulação emocional entre os participantes do processo educacional. O artigo também destaca práticas psicológicas, pedagógicas e de gestão fundamentais, de natureza emocional e ética. Argumenta-se que a ética normativa dos professores regula a interação moral na sociedade, ao passo que a ética profissional em tempos de guerra deve priorizar o humanismo, a empatia e a responsabilidade pelos resultados educacionais.

Palavras-chave
Competência Ética, Ética Pedagógica, Reputação Ética, Comunicação, Pedagogia da Arte.

Resumen
La compleja naturaleza comunicativa del entorno educativo exige que los docentes demuestren competencia ética, empatía y responsabilidad social, especialmente bajo la ley marcial. El respeto por la identidad cultural, la autoconciencia y la comunicación interpersonal eficaz son fundamentales para mantener un proceso educativo de apoyo en tiempos de guerra. El objetivo del artículo es analizar la formación y el desarrollo de la ética, la empatía y la responsabilidad social de los docentes en condiciones de ley marcial. El estudio examina la ética pedagógica como un recurso interno para afrontar los desafíos psicológicos y pedagógicos en tiempos de guerra. Los resultados indican que la ética y la empatía actúan como herramientas importantes para brindar apoyo emocional y psicológico, motivar a los participantes en el proceso educativo y desarrollar una comunicación asertiva. Se establece que la responsabilidad social y el comportamiento ético de los docentes contribuyen a la resistencia al estrés, la resiliencia, la tolerancia, el tacto pedagógico y la autorregulación emocional entre los participantes del proceso educativo. El artículo también destaca prácticas clave de índole psicológica, pedagógica y de gestión, de carácter emocional y ético. Se argumenta que la ética normativa de los docentes regula la interacción moral en la sociedad, mientras que la ética profesional en tiempos de guerra debe priorizar el humanismo, la empatía y la responsabilidad respecto a los resultados educativos.

Palabras clave
Competencia Ética, Ética Pedagógica, Reputación Ética, Comunicación, Pedagogía Artística.

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1. Introduction

Teaching in the unstable conditions of martial law faces new challenges and problems that affect not only aspects of the organization of the educational process, but also the moral and psychological state of its participants. Despite significant transformations under the influence of war, pedagogical ethics retain their immanent nature, which allows them to remain invariant in terms of their axiological basis. The priority aspects remain, as before, humanism, justice, honesty, social responsibility, and respect for human dignity, which makes it possible to overcome new challenges on the path of society's development during wartime. At the same time, pedagogical activity requires the intensification of the component of empathy, as well as the formation of inclusive approaches to the development of communication interaction.

An analysis of literary sources on the research topic (Byrko, 2022; Dudnik *et al*., 2025; Elkin, 2023; Pavlyshyna & Kuzava, 2024; Luchaninova, 2025; Pukhno & Shcherbak, 2022; Yaroschuk, 2022; Anushkevych, 2025) allowed us to identify the key components of professional pedagogical ethics in wartime based on the principles of the moral paradigm of education: the transformation of communication style and the replacement of the educational-disciplinary model with a personality-oriented one, the growing role of empathy and social responsibility of the teacher. At the same time, a number of aspects of the problem have been studied fragmentarily, given the complexities of martial law and their impact on pedagogical activity.

2. Literature Review

This issue is actively developing in contemporary scientific discourse. In particular, publications by Pyshchyk (2023) and Popov (2025) identified specific features of the development of communicative culture and tolerance of teachers in conditions of martial law: overcoming fear and anxiety as consequences of increased emotional tension, support as a means of satisfying the need for crisis communication, emphasis on the mental health of participants in the educational process, adaptation to distance learning, increasing resilience, flexibility, and empathy, and actualizing the role of nonviolent communication. Hren & Kurbanova (2023) have identified key value orientations for educators during martial law, including professional (creativity, critical thinking, objectivity, competence, scientific approach, motivation), life (family, well-being, health, creative individualism, love and peace, stability), national (educating young people on the ideas of peace, initiative, humanity and security, linguistic globalization, social responsibility, patriotism), spiritual (social justice, independence, human rights, democracy, European choice, freedom in all its manifestations).

At the same time, Khoruzha (2024) established that the key aspects of ethics as an internal resource for teachers are professional identity, moral basis, value foundation, emotional stability, and the desire for self-development. Global interdisciplinary scientific discourse includes basic research on the subject, where pedagogical activity is considered in the context of social capital and psychological support for participants in the educational process (publications by Berchin *et al*. (2021), Burgess *et al*. (2020)). At the same time, González-Pérez & Ramírez-Montoya (2022) highlight the key task of the teacher – to create a microclimate in which each student feels like a full participant in the pedagogical process.

Today, we have to acknowledge the fact that one of the main disciplines in the training of future teachers, "Professional Ethics", is not in demand. The legacy of domestic educators and thinkers on the moral education of children and young people does not find its place in the curricula of future teachers, which leads to a contradiction with the ideas of patriotic education. The lack of practical strategies for transforming pedagogical ethics is seen as a gap in the current scientific discourse. Improving approaches to adapting educational activities during wartime requires practical practices to increase the role of empathy, ethics, and social responsibility.

The aim of this article is to provide a comprehensive analysis of the formation and development of ethics, social responsibility, and empathy among educators during martial law.

3. Materials and Methods

The following methods were used to achieve the research objectives:

1. Theoretical methods of analysis, synthesis, and generalization based on the study of psychological and pedagogical literature and the synthesis of key theoretical provisions, which made it possible to fully comprehend the content of the scientific problem, clarify the terminology, and systematize conceptual approaches to defining basic criteria and concepts.
2. Empirical methods – the "Interpersonal Diagnosis" technique (authored by T. Leary) – to study the ethics of teachers; the empathy research technique (authored by A. Megrabyan and N. Epstein) – to study the specifics of the development of empathy in teachers; questionnaires – a questionnaire for self-assessment of the level of social responsibility.
3. Statistical methods – correlation analysis.

4. Results

The ethical requirements imposed on teachers in connection with their activities within the "person-to-person" system are reflected in the professional and ethical code of pedagogical activity.

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In times of war, the primary ethical principles that scientific and pedagogical workers should follow in their practical activities are considered relevant (Table 1).

Table 1

Basic ethical principles of pedagogical activity during martial law

Ethical principle	Features of application in pedagogical activity
Accepting a child as they are	When solving problems in children's life situations, teachers should focus on the reasonable nature of their demands and encourage them to take independent action to solve their problems. Neither personal qualities nor physical disabilities can serve as grounds for any form of discrimination against a child (or other object of the teacher's actions). Teachers must take into account all the specific characteristics of their pupils.
Respect for the child's right to make make independent decisions at any stage of joint action	Regardless of the rationality of a student's actions, the teacher cannot force them (psychologically or physically) to adhere to their professional logic. The main tools of influence available to the teacher are evidence and arguments, the logic of persuasion, the ethical values of the state and society, the norms of current legislation, the capabilities of the social protection system, and their own professional experience.
Confidentiality of cooperation	Confidential information (trusted, not subject to disclosure) is anything related to the personal qualities and problems of participants in the educational process. The teacher must guarantee such confidentiality and take all measures to ensure it, informing the participant in the educational process in advance that certain information must be passed on to other employees, possibly to management, in order to make the best decision at the highest administrative level. However, even in this case, such information may only be disclosed with permission and only to those who are directly involved in resolving this specific issue. A breach of confidentiality is only possible in cases of immediate danger to life, health, material or mental well-being.
The principle of teacher responsibility for the results of their work	When dealing with specific professional problems, teachers are personally responsible for the results of their activities, for their quality and effectiveness, timeliness and efficiency, and for their consequences. Teachers are responsible not only to their clients, but also to themselves and their families. Constant involvement in solving a multitude of "other people's" problems, "living" with their students' hardships, needs, tragedies, and misfortunes objectively leads to professional "burnout" of the teacher's personality. Every teacher must be able to protect themselves both in their personal interests and in the interests of their students. Scientific and pedagogical workers are also responsible to their profession. They must enhance its prestige, social status in society, and significance in interpersonal and group communication in various types of society.
The principle of integrity	Integrity is a very important principle in connection with the need to ensure a balance of interests among all participants in the educational process. The personal integrity of a teacher consists in ensuring a reasonable balance, harmonizing the interests of all parties, and being able to prevent the establishment of priorities over others.

Source: compiled by the author based on Khoruzha (2024), Berchin *et al*. (2021), Burgess *et al*. (2020)

Thus, teaching during wartime requires not only professional training, developed competencies, and appropriate personal qualities, but also adherence to ethical standards and principles (Borenstein & Howard, 2021).

The empathetic culture of a teacher during martial law is seen as a set of coherent components, among which an important place is occupied by the ability to adequately understand and accurately

assess not only the state of the participant in the educational process, but also the main characteristics of a difficult life situation (case): the degree of social risk, the presence of a threat to life and health. Early detection of circumstances in this category creates conditions for the organization of timely assistance when the case has not yet had a serious traumatic impact on the situation and condition of the individual (Markova *et al*., 2020). Thus, an empathetic culture becomes a necessary condition for the effectiveness of the process of early detection of the specified life circumstances (cases) and the creation of an environment for effective multidisciplinary interaction for resolution or compensation within the framework of pedagogical activity (Reis *et al*., 2021).

Empathetic interaction plays a particularly important role at the stage of implementing the case management plan. It can be defined as the coordinated actions of two or more subjects based on compassion and understanding of the inner state of the other, with the aim of helping, assisting, and supporting. The elements of empathetic interaction include professional cooperation skills, systematic and competent use of facilitation methods, and encouragement of positive change. This ensures understanding and acceptance of the role of another person, while preserving the teacher's own psychological characteristics, creating and maintaining an atmosphere of trust and mutual respect, which guarantees the effectiveness, timeliness, and quality of support for students and their families who find themselves in difficult life circumstances and need outside help (Khutko & Pidleoian, 2023).

In the process of forming the empathetic culture of future specialists, attention should be paid to the development of moral qualities, the stability and meaningfulness of which create the necessary conditions for their moral health and character of actions in conditions of moral choice: generosity, responsibility, optimism, friendliness – everything that constitutes a natural human condition associated with the concepts of kindness, sensitivity, and cordiality. The system of training future teachers in wartime should be based on the key paradigm of cultural and psychological expediency " –self-development as formation," which serves as the basis for the formation of professional ethics of future scientific and pedagogical workers (Tamozhska *et al*., 2023a, 2023b, 2024). In the context of the development of professional ethics and social responsibility, it is necessary to focus on various aspects of the theoretical training of future teachers, in particular:

- awareness of the value of productive interaction with participants in the educational process, focus on the worldview and moral context of theoretical and practical knowledge and skills, manifestation of spiritual and moral support in the choice of methods of communication and interaction;
- researching ways of mutual understanding and awareness of the spiritual reality of another personality based on epistemology, choosing models of interaction and influence;

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– mastering models of professional communication, realizing their value layer (Hutabarat *et al*., 2023).

It is evident that the professional competence of educators during wartime is determined by their level of humanity, empathy, insight, and engagement. Educators act as "agents of understanding" and "agents of empathy", often demonstrating charisma as a method of influence. Among the criteria for the formation of professional ethics of teachers are also motivational and axiological criteria (motivation and focus of volitional efforts on the qualitative implementation of practical pedagogical activities); the cognitive-methodological criterion (depth, consistency, and completeness of ideas regarding the specifics of psychological and pedagogical functionality); the organizational-behavioral criterion (style of pedagogical activity, readiness for multilateral communication); personal-reflective criterion (striving for emotional-psychological and professional development, synergy of individual-meaningful formations).

To determine the level of empathy of teachers, the empathy research methodology (authored by A. Megrabian and N. Epstein) was used. This methodology uses a questionnaire to determine the level of emotional empathy. In general, the phenomenon of empathy is positioned as the ability to independently realize or feel the emotional state of another person, with the subsequent expression of one's own attitude in the form of sympathy or joy (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972).

Empathy is positioned as a phenomenon of a socio-psychological nature that has formed and developed in the process of interaction between people. At the same time, empathy is a kind of core of the communication process. In the course of communication interaction, empathy helps to ensure the balance of interpersonal relationships. Also, under the functional influence of the phenomenon of empathy, a person's behavioral response becomes socially conditioned. Obviously, with a high level of empathy, the potential for successful realization in professions that require proper perception and understanding of a partner in the process of communication increases, including the teaching profession.

The questionnaire for this methodology consists of 25 statements (Mehrabian & Epstein, 1972). The statements are worded in such a way that respondents, when answering the questions, cannot guess the true meaning of the actual information obtained from the answers. High levels of emotional empathy are inversely related to aggression. Instead, they are related to compliance, allowing the formation of a favorable microclimate for communication based on trust.

Individuals with high levels of emotional empathy generally have certain specific characteristics:

– they react more strongly to various emotional stimuli through physiological reactions.

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– they are emotional.
– demonstrate altruism in practical, real-life actions and are capable of providing selfless help;
– contribute to maintaining and strengthening friendly relationships;
– they do not actually show aggression;
– they prioritize positive social qualities;
– they have a personal orientation towards moral evaluation of activities.

The ability to sincerely rejoice and empathize with others is considered a valuable personal quality, but when it is exaggerated, it often leads to emotional dependence on others and increased vulnerability, which significantly complicates the process of socialization. Individuals who have an average (normal) level of emotional empathy usually have a high level of control over their own emotional expressions, but at the same time are unable to predict the progress of relationships in interpersonal communication. Individuals who are characterized by a low level of emotional empathy development usually have certain difficulties in establishing new contacts and communicating, feel uncomfortable in unfamiliar company, do not accept emotional actions and manifestations, and are characterized by difficulties in mutual understanding. Such individuals are more productive when working individually and are able to make rational decisions.

According to the methodology, the results of the emotional empathy study have a certain level of uniformity:

– 84–99 points indicate a pronounced emotional empathy;
– 42–66 points indicate a pronounced depth of empathy;
– 0–33 points indicate an unexpressed depth of emotional empathy.

The results of the analysis of the dependence of the data obtained as a result of applying the methodology on the self-determined level of emotional empathy formed by the respondents based on the questionnaire are presented in Table 2.

Table 2

Levels of emotional empathy development, %

	Self-assessment of empathy skills (questionnaire)			
Levels of empathy (methodology)	**High**	**Average**	**below average**	**undefined**
high	20	10	0	0
average	30	20	5	5
low	0	0	5	5

Source: compiled by the author based on Mehrabian & Epstein (1972)

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As shown in Table 2, twelve respondents demonstrated a high level of empathy: the ability to empathize is a positive personal quality for a physician in terms of controlling their own emotions. Respondents who identified themselves as having an average or high level of empathy as a result of self-diagnosis (questionnaire) were included in this category. Twenty-four respondents are characterized by an average level of emotional empathy: they have an optimal level of empathy for a doctor. This category includes respondents who identified themselves as having a high level of empathy, as well as those with an average and low level, and those who do not identify themselves as having empathy. At the same time, four respondents have a low level of emotional empathy: it is recommended that they undergo appropriate targeted training. This category includes respondents who identified themselves as having a low level of empathy or who were unable to determine their level of empathy.

Thus, 30% of respondents in the sample demonstrate a high level of emotional empathy, 60% demonstrate an average level, and 10% demonstrate a low level. Respondents with average and high levels of empathy independently determine a good level of empathy skills, while being ready to improve them.

The “Interpersonal Diagnosis” technique (authored by T. Leary) was used to study the specifics of interpersonal relationships, which demonstrates the ethics of a teacher in their professional communication. Researcher T. Leary proposed a basic scheme of social orientations and represented it in the form of a circle divided into sectors (Leary, 1957). Four orientations are marked on the horizontal and vertical axes: dominance-submission, friendliness-hostility. The main sectors are generally divided into eight parts, representing more private relationships.

The scheme proposed by T. Leary is based on the following assumption: the closer the results are to the center of the circle, the stronger the correlation between these results. It should be noted that the distance of the obtained indicators from the center of the circle determines the extremity or adaptability of behavior. In general, the questionnaire based on T. Leary’s methodology contains 128 evaluative judgments (Leary, 1957).

The results obtained using the selected methodology were compared with the respondents’ self-assessed levels of development of the relevant skills during the survey. Respondents with a high level of self-determination of the formation of social responsibility skills formed a subgroup with a high level, those with an average level formed a corresponding subgroup, and those with a low level of self-determined formation and those who could not determine their level formed a low-level subgroup. The results are presented in Table 3.

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Table 3

Ethical tendencies according to T. Leary's "Interpersonal Diagnosis" method of interpersonal relationship research (average values)

Octants (according to the methodology)	Levels of self-determination of social responsibility		
	High	Medium	Low
I (authoritarian)	12	9	11.75
II (selfish)	4.67	6.4	8
III (aggressive)	6	6.22	7
IV (suspicious)	7	7.44	8.25
V (subordinate)	5.67	8.67	7
VI (dependent)	5.00	6.67	6.75
VII (friendly)	9.33	8.89	10
VIII (altruistic)	10.67	9.78	9

Source: compiled by the author based on Leary (1957)

As shown in Table 3, there are some differences between the octant indicators in the average values of the identified subgroups.

First of all, it is necessary to note the octant indicators, according to which respondents with high levels are characterized by adaptive behavior:

– according to octants II, III, and IV, these respondents exhibit selfish traits, stubbornness and persistence, a tendency to compete, energy and persistence, and criticality towards both those around them and social phenomena;

– according to octants VI and V, respondents are characterized by politeness, trustfulness, gentleness, compliance, and modesty, a tendency to be impressed by others, emotional restraint, and the ability to obey.

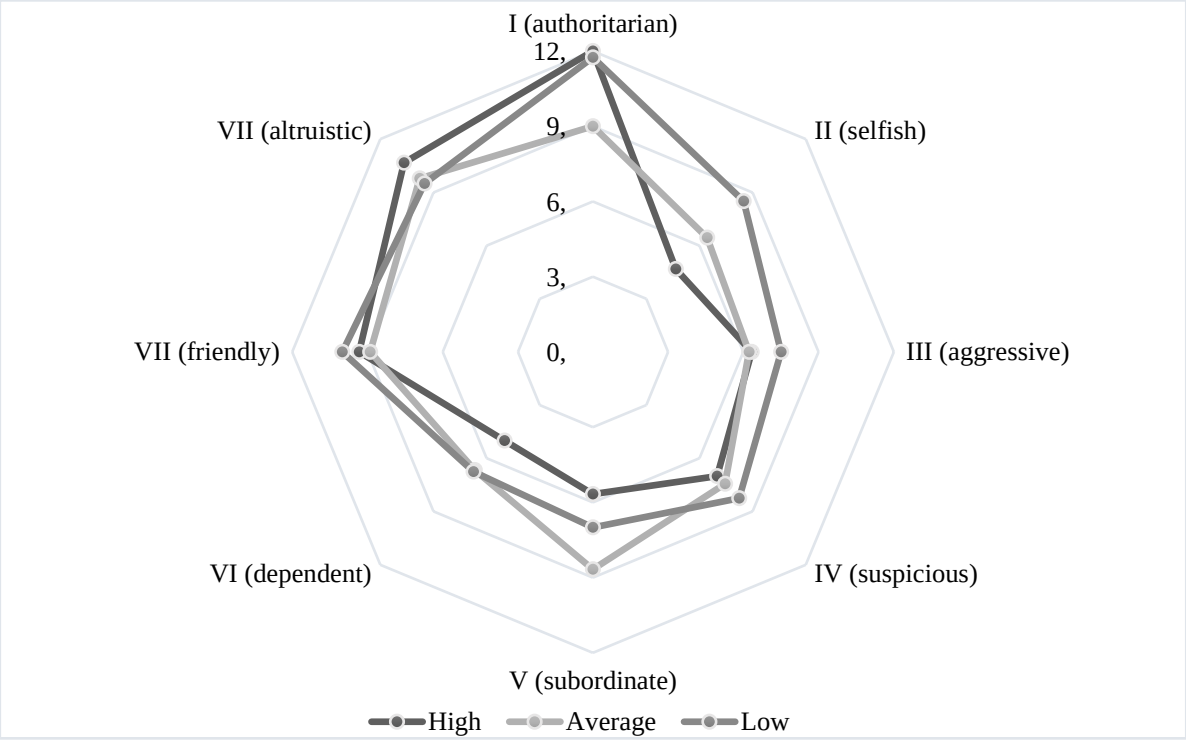
The results are shown graphically in Figure 1.

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Figure 1

Dependence of teachers' ethics (according to the methodology of interpersonal relations research) on the development of social responsibility



Source: compiled by the author based on Leary (1957)

Thus, Figure 2 demonstrates the most adaptive behavior of teachers and a sufficiently high level of social responsibility. The formation of an ethical culture in modern pedagogical activity should be viewed as a purposeful process of developing a context of shared values, behavior patterns, and a common vision based on the strategy, mission, and idea of pedagogical activity. At the same time, the main efforts of teachers should be focused on developing individual styles of interaction with other participants in the educational process and a system of artifacts for achieving common goals (Murkatik *et al.*, 2020).

The ethical component of pedagogical activity during wartime depends, to a large extent, on the level of emotional burnout of the employee and their behavioral and motivational characteristics. In wartime, educators experience psychological problems (latent stress, psycho-emotional overload, etc.), which are often hidden and cause emotional professional burnout. The results of the Go Global study, which were presented to the public at the press conference "Educational Front. The Impact of War on Educators," showed that 54% of teachers have experienced professional burnout, and 46% need psychological and methodological support (More than half of the teachers surveyed experience burnout – research results, 2023).

Therefore, pedagogical ethics in wartime should reflect key characteristics: a systematic view of the professional situation; a focus on the resource aspects of the individual and the situation; mastery of the means of communicative influence; and personal professional responsibility. The basis of pedagogical ethics is not only ethical rules and norms, but also mechanisms of emotional self-regulation and self-assessment, tolerance, and tact.

5. Discussion

A survey conducted in 2023 in Kyiv (Organization of the educational process in Kyiv schools under martial law: analytical report, 2023) showed that more than a quarter of students need emotional support from teachers during wartime, while 17.2% of parents seek help from teaching staff in maintaining their children's mental health. According to Gorski *et al*. (2023), problems in the interaction between participants in the educational process are often ethical in nature: a teacher's misunderstanding of students' motives, an atmosphere of alienation, and tactless behavior can lead to the development of deethicization of the teacher's behavior.

Biesta (2020) identifies the basis for overcoming these problems as teachers overcoming internal contradictions and emotional instability and engaging in self-reflection on their teaching activities. Researchers Kikanloo *et al*. (2019) argue that ethics itself is a powerful resource for increasing resilience, achieving inner balance, and ethical invariance in crisis social conditions – compassion, respect, justice, social responsibility, adaptability, assertiveness, etc.

In the context of the problem under study, the mastery of assertive behavior practices – defending one's own position without violating the ethical rights of another person – is positioned as a necessary component of a teacher's professional development. Head (2020), Kovalchuk *et al*. (2022) identify key ethical norms that form the basis of an assertive behavioural model, the main one being the synergy of tolerance and the manifestation of inner strength towards all participants in the educational process, which allows avoiding the destructive consequences of prolonged war stress, such as fear, frustration, disappointment, anxiety, etc.

Mâță *et al*. (2020) include responsibility for personal behavior, emotional intelligence, openness, confidence, and the desire to reach a compromise among the principles of assertive behavior in pedagogical activity. This approach is ethical in nature and reflects the essence of pedagogical tact and tolerance – strengthening mutual trust, honesty and transparency in communication, and emotional stability.

To develop assertive behavior in educators, it is advisable to use a trauma-informed approach in professional activities. At least, this is what Tatto (2021) argues. This approach helps to avoid

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professional burnout, establish trusting relationships, and expand the rights and opportunities of participants in the educational process.

In summary, the development of teachers' emotional, social, and ethical intelligence during wartime requires a focus on strengthening self-management and emotional self-awareness skills, social awareness and communication interaction, and responsible decision-making. Given that in times of crisis in social development, teaching is of great social importance, it is necessary to preserve the psycho-emotional health of teachers, maintain a favorable psychological microclimate, and apply the norms and values of teaching ethics as tools for self-improvement.

6. Conclusions

A comprehensive understanding of the ethical component of pedagogical activity during martial law allows us to insist on the growing influence of ethics and empathy of teachers in the modern educational environment. Ethics is currently positioned as a system-forming regulator of pedagogical activity, which forms the basis for increasing the adaptability and resilience of participants in the educational process, developing assertive behavior in communication, and forming a favorable tolerant environment for learning.

The empirical study revealed that there is a close connection between the ethical aspects of teachers' professional activities, empathy, and the level of social responsibility. In particular, the results confirm the dependence of teachers' ethics (according to the methodology of interpersonal relations research) on the development of social responsibility. At the same time, the main efforts of teachers should be focused on developing individual styles of interaction with other participants in the educational process and a system of artifacts for achieving common goals.

Future research directions should be shaped based on the national structure of the pedagogical system for shaping professional ethics and the potential of successful European practices, which is considered necessary both during a prolonged war and in the period of post-war recovery.

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