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# **The Relationship between Stress, Eco-Anxiety, Religiosity, and Spirituality in Ukraine: A Study of Mental Models**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The full-scale war in Ukraine poses a threat not only to human life but also to the environment, leading to increased anxiety among the population, which interacts with their religious and spiritual beliefs. However, qualitative studies examining the relationship between stress, eco-anxiety, and religious-spiritual beliefs remain limited, particularly in the unique Ukrainian context. A study of mental models among Ukrainian women (N=10), one of the vulnerable population groups, revealed an inversion of stress priorities under conditions of war. It was found that intense stress induced by social injustice ("social betrayal") and loss of internal control and quality of life may exceed the fear of physical death. Traumatic stress related to war dominates over experiences of eco-anxiety (rendering it a "deferred risk"), yet both types of stress are clearly distinguished by Ukrainian women. Religious and spiritual beliefs are used instrumentally: Atheism/Agnosticism may foster radical personal responsibility, removing religious constraints, while also being perceived as more oppressive. Esotericism/Karma/Fatalism can facilitate fatalistic acceptance and convert potential feelings of helplessness into a "Cascading Effect" - a belief that small actions can influence broader systemic contexts. Thus, the study provides a unique empirical basis for the development of targeted psychological interventions that take into account the hierarchy of stress components, the particularities of experiencing eco-anxiety, and the use of religious and spiritual beliefs as a resilience resource under conditions of chronic trauma and environmental threat.

**Keywords:** beliefs; coping strategies; environmental psychology; qualitative research; ukrainian war