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DIGITALIZATION OF SOCIAL SERVICES AS A FACTOR IN ENSURING THE RESILIENCE OF UKRAINE'S SOCIAL SECTOR UNDER MARTIAL LAW

The article provides a theoretical conceptualization of the digitalization of social services as a strategic factor in ensuring the resilience of Ukraine's social sector under martial law. The relevance of the study is determined by the transformation of the population's social needs, the increasing burden on the social protection system, large-scale internal displacement, the destruction of social infrastructure, workforce losses, and the need to ensure the continuity of social service provision during a prolonged societal crisis. The study argues that contemporary challenges require digitalization to be reconsidered not merely as a direction of technological modernization or the automation of individual administrative procedures, but as a comprehensive socio-technological process that transforms the principles governing the social protection system, mechanisms of interagency collaboration, the professional roles of social work practitioners, and models of interaction among the state, territorial communities, and recipients of social services.

The purpose of the article is to provide a theoretical justification for the role of the digitalization of social services as a factor in ensuring the resilience of Ukraine's social sector under martial law, to synthesize contemporary scholarly approaches to the digital transformation of the social sector, and to identify conceptual directions for strengthening the organizational resilience of the social service system in the context of current crisis-related challenges.

To achieve this objective, the study employs a set of complementary research methods, including analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization, systematization, theoretical modelling, and the interpretation of scholarly sources. The theoretical framework is based on the works of Ukrainian and international scholars addressing the digital transformation of the social sector, international analytical reports, and the legislative and regulatory framework of Ukraine governing the development of the digitalization of social services.

The study demonstrates that the digitalization of social services enhances the organizational resilience of the social sector through the development of digital infrastructure, the integration of information systems and government registers, the implementation of electronic services, strengthened interagency cooperation, the enhancement of digital competencies among social work professionals, and the promotion of digital inclusion. It is argued that only a comprehensive combination of technological, organizational, and human resources can ensure the continuity of social service provision, increase the adaptability of social institutions to crisis conditions, improve the timeliness of managerial decision-making, enhance the targeting of social support, and strengthen the overall effectiveness of the social protection system. Particular attention is paid to the analysis of the contemporary challenges associated with the digital transformation of the social sector, including the digital divide, uneven development of digital infrastructure across territorial communities, insufficient digital competencies among both social work professionals and recipients of social services, as well as issues related to information security and the protection of personal data.

The article proposes a conceptual approach to examining the digitalization of social services through the lens of social sector resilience. Within this framework, digital technologies are viewed not as an end in themselves but as instruments for strengthening institutional capacity, fostering cross-sectoral collaboration, ensuring the continuity of social support, and



enhancing the adaptability of the social sector to contemporary crisis-related challenges. The study identifies strategic directions for the further development of the digital transformation of the social sector, including the establishment of a unified digital environment for the social sector, the development of digital ecosystems within territorial communities, the strengthening of cross-sectoral digital partnerships, the application of data analytics to managerial decision-making, and the systematic implementation of a human-centered approach to the organization and delivery of social services. The findings contribute to the advancement of contemporary theoretical perspectives on the digitalization of the social sector and may inform the improvement of Ukraine's public policy on the digital transformation of social protection, the development of social service systems within territorial communities, and the professional education and continuing professional development of social work practitioners.

Key words: territorial community, digitalization of social services, social sector, organizational resilience, digital transformation, social work, social protection, martial law, digital inclusion, electronic social services, digital governance.

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ЦИФРОВІЗАЦІЯ СОЦІАЛЬНИХ ПОСЛУГ ЯК ЧИННИК ЗАБЕЗПЕЧЕННЯ СТІЙКОСТІ СОЦІАЛЬНОЇ СФЕРИ УКРАЇНИ В УМОВАХ ВОЄННОГО СТАНУ

У статті здійснено теоретичне осмислення цифровізації соціальних послуг як стратегічного чинника забезпечення стійкості соціальної сфери України в умовах воєнного стану. Актуальність дослідження зумовлена трансформацією соціальних потреб населення, зростанням навантаження на систему соціального захисту, масштабним внутрішнім переміщенням населення, руйнуванням соціальної інфраструктури, кадровими втратами та необхідністю забезпечення безперервності надання соціальних послуг в умовах тривалої суспільної кризи. Обґрунтовано, що сучасні виклики потребують переосмислення цифровізації не лише як пряму технологічної модернізації або автоматизації окремих адміністративних процедур, а як комплексного соціально-технологічного процесу, який змінює принципи функціонування системи соціального захисту, механізми міжвідомчої взаємодії, професійні ролі фахівців соціальної роботи та моделі взаємодії між державою, територіальними громадами й отримувачами соціальних послуг.

Метою статті є теоретичне обґрунтування ролі цифровізації соціальних послуг як чинника забезпечення стійкості соціальної сфери України в умовах воєнного стану, узагальнення сучасних наукових підходів до цифрової трансформації соціальної сфери та визначення концептуальних напрямів підвищення організаційної стійкості системи соціальних послуг в умовах сучасних кризових викликів.

Для досягнення поставленої мети використано комплекс взаємодоповнювальних методів наукового дослідження, зокрема аналіз, синтез, порівняння, узагальнення, систематизацію, теоретичне моделювання та інтерпретацію наукових джерел. Теоретичну основу дослідження становлять праці українських і зарубіжних науковців із проблем цифрової трансформації соціальної сфери, міжнародні аналітичні документи, а також нормативно-правові акти України, що регламентують розвиток цифровізації соціальних послуг.

У статті доведено, що цифровізація сприяє підвищенню організаційної стійкості соціальної сфери завдяки розвитку цифрової інфраструктури, інтеграції інформаційних систем і державних реєстрів, використанню електронних сервісів, розвитку міжвідомчої взаємодії, цифрових компетентностей фахівців соціальної роботи та забезпеченню цифрової інклюзії населення. Обґрунтовано, що лише комплексне поєднання технологічних, організаційних і людських ресурсів забезпечує безперервність надання соціальних послуг, підвищує адаптивність соціальних інституцій до кризових умов, оперативність прийняття управлінських рішень, адресність соціальної підтримки та ефективність функціонування системи соціального захисту. Особливу увагу приділено аналізу сучасних викликів цифрової трансформації соціальної сфери, серед яких цифрова нерівність, нерівномірний розвиток цифрової інфраструктури територіальних громад, недостатній рівень цифрових компетентностей

фахівців і отримувачів соціальних послуг, а також забезпечення інформаційної безпеки та захисту персональних даних.

Запропоновано концептуальний підхід до розгляду цифровізації соціальних послуг крізь призму забезпечення стійкості соціальної сфери, відповідно до якого цифрові технології виступають не самоціллю реформування, а інструментом зміцнення інституційної спроможності, розвитку міжсекторальної взаємодії, забезпечення безперервності соціальної підтримки та підвищення адаптивності соціальної сфери до сучасних кризових викликів. Визначено стратегічні напрями подальшого розвитку цифрової трансформації соціальної сфери, що передбачають формування єдиного цифрового простору соціальної сфери, розвиток цифрової екосистеми територіальних громад, зміцнення міжсекторального цифрового партнерства, використання аналітики даних у процесі прийняття управлінських рішень і послідовне впровадження людиноцентричного підходу до організації соціальних послуг. Отримані результати розширюють сучасні теоретичні уявлення про цифровізацію соціальної сфери та можуть бути використані під час удосконалення державної політики цифрової трансформації соціального захисту, розвитку системи соціальних послуг у територіальних громадах, а також у професійній підготовці й підвищенні кваліфікації фахівців соціальної роботи.

Ключові слова: територіальна громада, цифровізація соціальних послуг, соціальна сфера, організаційна стійкість, цифрова трансформація, соціальна робота, соціальний захист, воєнний стан, цифрова інклюзія, електронні соціальні послуги, цифрове врядування.

Problem Statement. Amid the full-scale war, Ukraine's social sector has faced a dual challenge. On the one hand, the number of people requiring social support has increased dramatically; on the other hand, conventional mechanisms for delivering social services have frequently become constrained by security risks, forced population displacement, the destruction of infrastructure, workforce shortages within territorial communities, and unequal access to assistance. Under these circumstances, the digitalization of social services has evolved beyond being merely an indicator of administrative modernization. It has become a critical instrument for ensuring the resilience, continuity, and adaptability of the social sector.

The digital transformation of social services in Ukraine should not be understood simply as the transfer of individual administrative procedures into electronic formats. Rather, it represents a profound transformation of the relationships among the state, territorial communities, social work professionals, and individuals in need of support. This transformation entails the development of a new architecture of social assistance in which data, digital platforms, electronic registers, remote counselling, mobile applications, and interagency cooperation serve as essential mechanisms for responding promptly to social risks.

At the same time, digitalization should not be viewed as a universal solution to all challenges facing the social sector. While it has the potential to expand access to social services, it may also exacerbate existing inequalities, particularly among older adults, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, residents of rural

communities, and other groups with limited access to the Internet, digital devices, or the digital skills necessary to use electronic services effectively. Consequently, the key issue extends beyond the availability of digital services to encompass their human-centered design, accessibility, ethical implementation, and capacity to strengthen, rather than replace, professional social work.

This article conceptualizes the digitalization of social services as a factor in ensuring the resilience of Ukraine's social sector under martial law. Such an approach shifts the focus from a narrow understanding of digital technologies as instruments of administrative convenience toward their strategic role in sustaining the viability of territorial communities, preserving access to social support, improving the targeting of social assistance, and strengthening the capacity of the social protection system to respond effectively to crisis situations.

Particular attention is paid to the premise that the resilience of the social sector is determined not only by technological innovations but also by the people who ensure their effective implementation, including social work professionals, community specialists, volunteers, representatives of civil society organizations, and digital intermediaries. From this perspective, the digitalization of social services in Ukraine should be understood as a socio-technological process in which the individual remains at the center, with primary emphasis placed on human dignity, needs, rights, and the ability to receive timely support even under the most challenging conditions of war.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. The digitalization of social services has become one of the principal directions of modernization within social protection systems worldwide. In contemporary international scholarly discourse, the digital transformation of the social sector is viewed not merely as the implementation of information and communication technologies but as a strategic mechanism for enhancing the accessibility, continuity, and quality of social services, improving public administration, promoting human-centered governance, and strengthening the resilience of social systems to crisis situations (European Commission, 2021; OECD, 2020; United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2022).

In Ukraine, the digitalization of the social sector has gained particular significance in the context of social protection reform, decentralization, and the introduction of martial law. The scholarly literature conceptualizes the digitalization of social services as a comprehensive process of modernizing the social sector that encompasses the implementation of digital technologies, the automation of administrative processes, the development of electronic services, the enhancement of digital competencies among professionals, and the creation of organizational conditions for the effective use of digital solutions in social work (Hrytsenko, 2024; Gunko, 2024a, 2024b).

One of the most extensively researched areas concerns the digitalization of social services within territorial communities. Scholars, including Gunko, Liakh, Vainola, and Lekholetova, argue that the effectiveness of social service systems depends not only on the resource capacity of territorial communities but also on their level of digital maturity, the development of cross-sectoral collaboration, the availability of qualified human resources, and the digital competencies of social sector professionals (Gunko et al., 2024). Subsequent studies further demonstrate that digital technologies create new opportunities for the personalization of social support, the expansion of service accessibility, and the promotion of digital inclusion among vulnerable population groups (Gunko et al., 2025).

Another important strand of research focuses on digital inclusion and the reduction of the

digital divide. Existing studies indicate that volunteer activities within territorial communities increasingly perform the role of digital mediation by facilitating access to electronic social services, supporting the development of digital skills, and bringing social services closer to residents of remote areas (Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025a). At the same time, expert studies identify insufficient digital competencies among the population, uneven development of digital infrastructure across territorial communities, technical constraints, and shortages of qualified personnel as the principal barriers to the digitalization of social services (Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025b).

The digitalization of the social sector has acquired particular importance under martial law. Recent studies demonstrate that digital technologies enhance the effectiveness of social support for internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, and other socially vulnerable groups by improving the timeliness of communication, increasing access to social services, and ensuring the continuity of social support and case management (Gunko & V. Liakh, 2025; Gunko & V. Liakh, 2026).

Alongside the advancement of digitalization practices, considerable scholarly attention has been devoted to examining the European experience of the digital transformation of social protection systems. Researchers emphasize the need to harmonize Ukraine's social protection system with the European Union's digital standards, enhance the interoperability of public information resources, strengthen the digital competencies of the population, and ensure an appropriate level of cybersecurity (Chernadchuk & Tomurko, 2025; Mustafaiev, 2025).

Contemporary scholarly approaches to the digital transformation of the social sector are reflected in Ukraine's regulatory framework governing the digitalization of social services. This framework includes the Laws of Ukraine On Social Services, On Electronic Trust Services, On Personal Data Protection, and On Public Electronic Registers; the Order of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine On Approval of the Concept for the Development of Digital Competencies and the Action Plan for Its Implementation; and the Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine On the Implementation of the Pilot Project for the Deployment of the First-Phase

Functionalities of the Unified Information System of the Social Sector. Collectively, these legal and regulatory instruments provide the foundation for the development of the social sector's digital infrastructure, the implementation of electronic services, the operation of information systems and public registers, the protection of personal data, and the enhancement of digital competencies among both social work professionals and recipients of social services.

In summary, contemporary research provides compelling evidence that the digitalization of social services represents a significant direction for the development of the social sector. It contributes to improving access to social support, promoting digital inclusion, strengthening the capacity of territorial communities, and expanding the potential of social work under martial law. At the same time, the review of the existing literature indicates that insufficient attention has been paid to examining digitalization specifically as a factor in strengthening the organizational resilience of Ukraine's social sector under martial law.

The purpose of the article is to provide a theoretical justification for the role of the digitalization of social services as a factor in ensuring the resilience of Ukraine's social sector under martial law, to synthesize contemporary scholarly approaches to the digital transformation of the social sector, and to identify conceptual directions for strengthening the organizational resilience of the social service system in the context of contemporary crisis-related challenges.

Main Body. The digital transformation of the social sector represents a natural response to profound societal changes driven by the advancement of digital technologies, evolving models of public governance, and the growing demand for fast, accessible, and human-centered social services. Whereas a decade ago digitalization was primarily associated with the automation of individual administrative procedures, it is now understood as a systemic process of rethinking the organization of the social sector, transforming the modes of interaction among the state, territorial communities, social service providers, and recipients of social services (European Commission, 2021; OECD, 2020).

In contemporary scholarly discourse, the concepts of digitalization and digital

transformation are often used interchangeably. However, we argue that a fundamental distinction exists between them. Digitalization primarily refers to the introduction of digital technologies, information systems, electronic services, and digital tools into the operation of the social sector. Digital transformation, by contrast, is a much broader phenomenon that entails a qualitative transformation of the principles governing the social service system, managerial processes, the professional roles of social work practitioners, and the models of interaction among all stakeholders involved in social policy (Gunko, 2024a, 2024b).

For this reason, digitalization should be regarded not as the ultimate goal of social sector reform but as an instrument for achieving its strategic objectives. These objectives include ensuring the accessibility, timeliness, targeting, transparency, and continuity of social services, as well as strengthening the capacity of the social protection system to function effectively even under conditions of large-scale societal disruption.

The full-scale war has fundamentally reshaped the operating environment of Ukraine's social sector. A substantial increase in the number of internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, families of military personnel, children experiencing difficult life circumstances, and other population groups requiring social support has coincided with the destruction of infrastructure, the forced displacement of professionals, security-related restrictions, and unequal resource capacities across territorial communities. Under these conditions, conventional approaches to organizing social work have proven insufficient to ensure a timely and effective response to emerging challenges.

In this context, digital technologies have become one of the key factors ensuring the continuity of the social service system. The use of electronic registers, digital platforms, remote counselling, electronic document management, and interagency information exchange has largely preserved access to social support, even in territorial communities significantly affected by military operations. At the same time, digitalization has contributed to reducing the time required for managerial decision-making, improving the targeting of social assistance, and enabling more efficient use of available

resources (Chernadchuk & Tomurko, 2025). Studies examining the functioning of social service systems within territorial communities demonstrate that the effectiveness of digital transformation depends not only on the level of technological infrastructure or the availability of modern software. Of critical importance are the organizational capacity of the community, the development of interagency cooperation, human resource capacity, the digital competencies of social service workers, and the ability of local institutions to integrate digital solutions into the everyday practice of social work. (Gunko et al., 2024).

Equally important is the fact that digitalization does not diminish the need for social work as a professional field of practice. On the contrary, it transforms its nature and scope. Social work practitioners increasingly assume the roles of coordinators, consultants, facilitators, and digital intermediaries, assisting individuals in navigating digital environments, accessing electronic services, and obtaining the support they need. This is particularly important for older adults, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and residents of rural territorial communities, for whom digital barriers may be as significant as administrative or geographical ones (Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025a).

For this reason, the promotion of digital inclusion should be regarded as an integral component of the digital transformation of the social sector. This involves not only ensuring technical access to digital services but also fostering digital competencies among the population, improving digital literacy, providing user support, and creating an inclusive and barrier-free digital environment. As evidenced by the findings of an expert study, the principal obstacles to the digitalization of social services remain the insufficient digital skills of service recipients, the uneven development of digital infrastructure across territorial communities, and the shortage of professionals capable of supporting the digital transformation of the social sector (Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025b).

Thus, under martial law, the digitalization of social services should be understood not merely as a technological or managerial process. It has become one of the key factors underpinning the resilience of the social sector by creating the

conditions necessary for the continuous delivery of social services, enhancing the adaptability of social institutions, improving the timeliness of managerial decision-making, expanding opportunities for interagency collaboration, and fostering a more human-centered model of social support. Through these interconnected functions, digitalization is gradually becoming one of the strategic resources for the development of Ukraine's social sector in the face of contemporary crisis-related challenges.

Under the current conditions of martial law, the resilience of the social sector is determined not only by the availability of adequate financial, human, and material resources. Equally important is the capacity of the social protection system to adapt rapidly to changing circumstances, ensure the continuity of social service provision, respond effectively to emerging social risks, and sustain the functioning of institutions even under conditions of high uncertainty. Consequently, the concept of organizational resilience has become increasingly significant, as it characterizes the ability of the social system to maintain its functionality, recover from the impacts of crises, and continue to develop in an environment of continuous change.

In our view, the digitalization of social services should be regarded as one of the key factors in ensuring such resilience. This extends beyond the mere adoption of digital technologies or the development of electronic services. Rather, it involves establishing a new model for organizing the social sector in which digital solutions ensure the continuity of processes, the integration of information flows, the timeliness of decision-making, and effective collaboration among all stakeholders involved in social work.

First, digitalization strengthens the institutional capacity of the social sector. The integration of information resources, the use of electronic registers, and the development of the Unified Information System of the Social Sector provide timely access to up-to-date information, reduce the duplication of administrative procedures, enhance the transparency of governance processes, and improve the evidence base for managerial decision-making. As a result, social service institutions are able to respond more rapidly to changing social needs, coordinate their activities more effectively, and improve the

targeting of social support (Law of Ukraine On Public Electronic Registers, 2021; Resolution of the Cabinet of Ministers of Ukraine No. 404, 2021).

At the same time, digitalization substantially enhances the adaptability of territorial communities. The experience of communities operating under martial law demonstrates that digital tools facilitate effective cooperation among local self-government authorities, social protection institutions, healthcare institutions, administrative service centers, civil society organizations, and volunteers. This contributes to faster decision-making, greater coordination among different actors, and a more integrated approach to addressing social challenges (Gunko et al., 2024).

Digitalization is particularly important in ensuring the continuity of social service provision. The full-scale war has demonstrated that traditional forms of social work may be severely constrained by the destruction of infrastructure, forced population displacement, security-related risks, and workforce shortages. By contrast, the use of remote counselling, electronic document management, digital platforms, and mobile services enables continuous communication between social work practitioners and service recipients regardless of their location, thereby ensuring the continuity of case management and the timely response to difficult life circumstances (Gunko & V. Liakh, 2026).

Moreover, digitalization creates the conditions for more targeted and human-centered social support. The use of digital data enables the rapid identification of the needs of different population groups, the development of individualized support pathways, the monitoring of social service outcomes, and evidence-informed decision-making based on up-to-date information. This is particularly important for supporting internally displaced persons, persons with disabilities, older adults, and other vulnerable groups whose needs change rapidly during wartime (Gunko et al., 2025; Gunko & V. Liakh, 2025).

At the same time, contemporary research provides compelling evidence that the effectiveness of digitalization depends not only on the level of technological development. Equally important are the digital competencies of social work practitioners, the readiness of

service recipients to use digital services, the level of digital inclusion, and the accessibility of digital infrastructure. Therefore, the digital transformation of the social sector should be accompanied by investments in human capacity development, professional education and training, the promotion of digital culture, and efforts to reduce the digital divide (Gunko, 2024b; Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025b).

In light of these considerations, it can be argued that the resilience of the social sector is shaped not by individual digital technologies but by their integration with contemporary governance approaches, interagency collaboration, the organizational capacity of territorial communities, and the professional readiness of social work practitioners to operate in digital environments. It is this integration of technological, organizational, and human resources that enables the social sector to function effectively even under conditions of large-scale societal crises.

The analysis of recent scholarly research, Ukraine's regulatory framework, and the practical functioning of the social protection system under martial law provides grounds for concluding that digitalization is not an end in itself in the reform of the social sector. Rather, its value lies primarily in its capacity to ensure the resilient functioning of social institutions, maintain the continuity of social service provision, and enhance the adaptability of the social protection system to emerging social challenges. In this context, digitalization should be viewed as a comprehensive mechanism that integrates technological, organizational, and social dimensions of development.

One of the key strategic priorities is the development of the social sector's digital infrastructure. This extends beyond equipping social protection institutions with modern technologies or implementing individual digital services. More importantly, it requires the creation of a unified digital environment that enables seamless interaction among public information resources, local self-government authorities, social service providers, healthcare and educational institutions, and civil society organizations. Such an integrated information environment facilitates timely decision-making, minimizes the duplication of information, and

improves the efficiency of resource utilization (Chernadchuk & Tomurko, 2025).

A second strategic priority is the development of digital competencies among social sector professionals. Contemporary research consistently demonstrates that even the most advanced digital solutions cannot achieve their intended impact without adequately trained personnel (Gunko, 2024b). Today's social work practitioners must possess not only professional expertise in social work but also competencies related to the use of digital platforms, electronic document management systems, public electronic registers, remote counselling, cybersecurity, and personal data protection. Consequently, digital competencies should be regarded as an essential component of the professional competence of contemporary social work practitioners.

Another important priority is the promotion of digital inclusion. Under current conditions, access to social services increasingly depends on individuals' ability to use digital services effectively. However, a considerable proportion of the population – particularly older adults, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, and residents of rural territorial communities – continues to experience various forms of digital exclusion. Therefore, alongside the expansion of digital services, it is essential to provide user training, advisory support, digital literacy initiatives, and targeted assistance for those population groups requiring support in accessing and using electronic social services (Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025a; Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025b).

Another strategic priority is the strengthening of cross-sectoral digital collaboration. Social support is no longer confined to the activities of social protection authorities alone. It increasingly requires continuous cooperation with educational and healthcare institutions, employment services, administrative service centers, civil society and charitable organizations, and international partners. Digital platforms facilitate the rapid exchange of information, coordination of joint activities, and the provision of integrated support for individuals experiencing difficult life circumstances (Gunko et al., 2024).

Particular attention should also be paid to the use of digital data in managerial decision-making. Digitalization creates fundamentally new opportunities for monitoring social

needs, forecasting social risks, evaluating the effectiveness of social programmes, and planning the development of social services at the level of territorial communities. The application of data analytics enables a shift from a reactive model of social support to a proactive one, in which social policy is shaped by the actual needs of the population rather than merely responding to existing problems (Gunko et al., 2025).

In summary, the digitalization of social services establishes a fundamentally new logic for the functioning of the social sector. Its significance lies not merely in the adoption of advanced technologies but, more importantly, in strengthening the capacity of social institutions to adapt rapidly to crisis conditions, ensure the continuity of social service provision, coordinate the activities of diverse social policy stakeholders, and maintain access to social support regardless of an individual's place of residence or the prevailing security situation. For these reasons, digitalization should be regarded as one of the fundamental drivers in building a resilient, adaptive, and human-centered social protection system in Ukraine.

Challenges and Prospects for the Digitalization of Social Services in Strengthening the Resilience of the Social Sector

Despite the substantial progress achieved in the digital transformation of the social sector, current practice demonstrates that its further development is accompanied by a number of challenges that may hinder the establishment of a resilient social protection system. Accordingly, digitalization should be understood not as a completed process of technological implementation but as an ongoing process of institutional transformation requiring the comprehensive development of digital infrastructure, professional competencies, regulatory and legal frameworks, and the digital culture of society.

One of the most significant challenges remains the digital divide, manifested in unequal access to digital technologies, the Internet, and electronic services. Older adults, persons with disabilities, internally displaced persons, residents of rural areas, and communities affected by military operations remain particularly vulnerable. Under these circumstances, even well-designed digital

services cannot guarantee equitable access to social support without targeted efforts to enhance digital literacy and promote digital inclusion across the population (Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025a; Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025b).

Another significant challenge is the uneven level of digital capacity across territorial communities. Practical experience demonstrates that communities differ substantially in terms of technological infrastructure, human resource capacity, the digital competencies of personnel, the ability to integrate public information systems, and their overall organizational readiness for digital transformation. These disparities result in variations in the quality of social services and unequal capacities among communities to respond promptly to crisis situations (Gunko et al., 2024).

Another issue of particular importance concerns workforce development for digitally enabled social work. Digitalization is transforming the nature of professional social work practice by introducing new requirements for digital competencies, including the ability to work with information systems, digital platforms, public electronic registers, and contemporary communication technologies. Accordingly, the professional education and training of social work practitioners require the revision of educational curricula, the systematic development of digital competencies, and continuous professional development opportunities (Gunko, 2024b).

Ensuring information security and the protection of personal data also represents a critical challenge. The expanding use of digital technologies in the social sector is accompanied by the accumulation of extensive volumes of personal information concerning recipients of social services. This underscores the need to maintain high standards of cybersecurity, protect information resources, and ensure the responsible processing of personal data in accordance with the legislation of Ukraine and relevant European standards (Chernadchuk & Tomurko, 2025).

At the same time, the findings of this study indicate that these challenges do not diminish the importance of digitalization. On the contrary, they define the priorities for its future development. A particularly promising direction is the completion of a unified digital environment for the social sector through the integration of public electronic registers, the further development of the Unified

Information System of the Social Sector, and the improvement of mechanisms for electronic interaction among public authorities, local self-government authorities, and social service providers.

Another important prospect is the development of digital ecosystems within territorial communities, where digital technologies are employed not only for the administration of social services but also for the comprehensive management of community social development. Such an approach involves the use of digital analytics to assess the social needs of the population, forecast social risks, plan the development of social infrastructure, and support evidence-informed managerial decision-making based on up-to-date data.

Under martial law, the development of cross-sectoral digital partnerships assumes particular importance. Such partnerships facilitate effective collaboration among public authorities, territorial communities, civil society organizations, charitable foundations, international partners, and volunteer initiatives. The integration of these resources creates the conditions necessary for addressing the social needs of the population in a comprehensive manner while strengthening the resilience of the social sector to crisis-related disruptions (Gunko et al., 2024; Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025a).

In our view, the further development of the digitalization of social services should focus not only on the implementation of new digital solutions but also on the establishment of a human-centered model of the social sector in which digital technologies serve as instruments for protecting human rights, promoting social justice, and improving the quality of life. Under such conditions, digitalization becomes not merely a direction of social sector modernization but a strategic resource for strengthening its resilience in the face of current and future societal challenges.

The findings of this study indicate that the impact of digitalization on the resilience of the social sector is multidimensional and extends far beyond the implementation of individual digital technologies or electronic services. Digital transformation creates new opportunities for integrating information resources, strengthening interagency collaboration, enhancing the

professional capacity of social work practitioners, expanding access to social services, and supporting evidence-informed managerial decision-making. The synthesis of the scholarly literature and the analysis of Ukraine's regulatory framework have made it possible to systematize the principal components of digitalization and to identify their contribution to strengthening the resilience of Ukraine's social sector (Table 1).

As shown in Table 1, the digitalization of social services strengthens the resilience of the social sector through the interconnected effects of technological, organizational, and social components. The greatest impact can be achieved only through their integrated development, as individual digital solutions alone cannot ensure system resilience without an adequate digital infrastructure, the professional preparation of social work practitioners, digital inclusion, and effective cross-sectoral collaboration. Accordingly, the digitalization of social services should be regarded not merely as an instrument for modernizing social service delivery but as a strategic factor in enhancing the adaptability, continuity, and overall effectiveness of Ukraine's social sector under martial law.

Conclusions. The findings of this study provide grounds for conceptualizing the digitalization of social services not merely as a direction of technological modernization within the social sector but as a strategic factor in strengthening its organizational resilience under martial law. Unlike the traditional understanding of digitalization as the implementation of electronic services and information and communication technologies,

the contemporary perspective recognizes its comprehensive influence on the organization, governance, and functioning of the social protection system. Digitalization creates the conditions necessary to ensure the continuity of social service provision, enhance the adaptability of social institutions, improve the timeliness of managerial decision-making, strengthen interagency collaboration, and promote a human-centered approach to social support.

The synthesis of contemporary scholarly approaches and practical experience in the digital transformation of the social sector has made it possible to identify the principal strategic priorities for strengthening its resilience. These include the development of digital infrastructure, the integration of information systems and public electronic registers, the enhancement of digital competencies among social work practitioners, the promotion of digital inclusion, the strengthening of cross-sectoral partnerships, and the application of data analytics in managerial decision-making. Their integrated implementation enhances the capacity of the social sector to respond effectively to contemporary crisis-related challenges, improve the targeting of social support, and maintain the continuity of its operations even under conditions of high uncertainty.

The scientific contribution of this study lies in substantiating the value of examining the digitalization of social services through the lens of social sector resilience. The proposed conceptual approach broadens existing perspectives on digital transformation by

Table 1

The Impact of Digitalization on Strengthening the Resilience of Ukraine's Social Sector

Component of Digitalization	Contribution to the Resilience of the Social Sector	Practical Outcomes
Development of Digital Infrastructure	Ensures the continuity of social service delivery	Improved access to social services during crises
Integration of Information Systems and Public Registers	Enhances the timeliness of governance and interagency collaboration	Reduced decision-making time
Development of Digital Competencies among Social Sector Professionals	Improves the quality of professional practice	More effective delivery of social services
Digital Inclusion of the Population	Reduces the digital divide	Expanded access to social support
Cross-Sectoral Digital Partnership	Strengthens coordination among social sector stakeholders	Comprehensive responses to social challenges
Use of Data Analytics	Enables evidence-informed decision-making	Improved targeting and effectiveness of social policy

Source: Developed by the author based on the analysis of the scholarly literature (Gunko, 2024a, 2024b; Gunko et al., 2024; Gunko et al., 2025; Gunko & T. Liakh, 2025a, 2025b; Gunko & V. Liakh, 2025; Gunko & V. Liakh, 2026; Chernadchuk & Tomurko, 2025).

emphasizing not only its technological dimension but also its organizational, managerial, and social significance. This makes it possible to conceptualize digitalization as an instrument for strengthening the capacity of the social sector to adapt, recover, and achieve sustainable development under martial law.

The practical significance of the findings lies in their potential application to the formulation of public policy on the digital transformation of the social sector, the improvement of local self-government practices, the development of social service systems within territorial communities, and the education and continuing professional development of social work practitioners. The proposed approaches may

also inform the development of digital strategies for territorial communities, the improvement of interagency cooperation mechanisms, and the enhancement of access to social support for different population groups.

Future research should focus on developing methodological approaches to assessing the impact of digitalization on the resilience of the social sector, defining criteria for evaluating the digital maturity of territorial communities, and exploring the potential of artificial intelligence, big data analytics, and other digital technologies for forecasting social needs, improving the management of social services, and advancing a human-centered social protection system in Ukraine.

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