

# Impact of Emotional Factors on Law Enforcement Officers

Dmitriy Evgenievich Dikopoltsev<sup>1</sup><sup>a</sup> and Grigoriy Alexandrovich Maystrenko<sup>1</sup><sup>b</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Federal State Institution Research Institute of the Federal Penitentiary Service of Russia, Moscow, the Russian Federation*

**Keywords:** Emotional factors, law enforcement units, stressful states of the personality, affect, anxiety, resistance to stress, emotional intelligence, distress.

**Abstract:** The article analyses the theory and practice of the influence of emotional factors on the professional activities of law enforcement officers, considers the characteristics of their work from the point of view of psychology. The aim of the article is the actualization of the need to study the emotional and psychological factors described in the research, their causes and the formation peculiarities and influence on employees of law enforcement services. The methodological basis of the work was based on general scientific research methods. The paper analyses theoretical approaches to the study of stress and stress resistance, as well as factors facilitating the emergence of stressful states of the individual. The psychoemotional specifics are described in the activities of law enforcement agencies and the rule of law, as well as factors contributing to the formation of stress resistance of employees, the concept of “stress resistance” is specified in relation to the activities of officers of law enforcement subdivisions, the relationship of negatively coloured emotional expressions with a low level of productivity in the service is established, individual behavioural features of employees of units of the penitentiary system, manifested in difficult life situations under the influence of negative emotions, are studied. The authors developed practical recommendations for improving the psychological state of officers of law enforcement services, based on the characteristics of their work activities, identified recommendations for conducting special trainings, teaching stress resistance and increasing the emotional intelligence of employees of law the penal system in order to prevent distress and form the necessary individual and personal qualities and skills of self-regulation of negative experiences.

## 1 INTRODUCTION


The professional activity of the law enforcement officers places high demands on the emotional sphere and human thinking abilities. The daily duties of employees are associated with a huge number of conflict situations, their working hours are often not standardized, which is the reason for increased fatigue, excessive irritation, anxiety and stress.


Scientific studies of the emotional states of the law enforcement officers prove that many of them, as a result of excessive work overload, are often subject to negative mental states, overwork, depressive moods, anxiety, increased fatigue, irritability, headache and insomnia. The need for psychological assistance is constantly growing, and meanwhile, the problematics of the issue continue to remain poorly

studied, which increases the relevance of this research.

Work in law enforcement units refers to the field of activity with an increased level of emotional stress and stressful situations. Its specificity makes high demands on the level of stress resistance, mental and physical endurance of employees, as well as on their personal qualities, which contribute not only to the ability to navigate in difficult situations from a professional point of view, but also to success in the fight against crimes. Self-control maintaining is an important factor in activities related to the legal field and law enforcement bodies.

Emotions and feelings experienced by a person, including in the process of performing his professional duties, are characteristic forms of reflection of reality. But, unlike cognitive processes, emotions and feelings primarily reflect a personal

<sup>a</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1225-7490>

<sup>b</sup> <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5658-615X>

attitude to events and make an assessment of their significance (Zelenova M.E., Zakharov A.V., 2014).

It should be noted that anxiety and fear that the employees feel in the process of carrying out their official duties in dangerous to life and health situations often lead to affective states, and ultimately to the complete cessation of necessary actions and total rejection of the performance of their professional tasks, which often becomes the cause of tragic incidents in the service. Due to the fact that many officers of law enforcement units do not have a good command of psychological methods of overcoming and self-control of psychological states in situations of life risk, the problem of reducing the impact of negative emotional factors on them requires further development.

## 2 MATERIALS AND METHODS

In the course of the study, a complex of general scientific methods was used that apply to the review of sources and scientific literature on the emotional and psychological side of the issue – analysis and synthesis of the material, the method of comparative analysis and generalization, which made it possible to examine both the theory of the considered problem and the practical actions of employees of law enforcement units in extreme situations in the conditions of the penitentiary system.

A. Khvostov, L. Protsenko, V. Mukhina, A.M. Stolyarenko, S.L. Solov'eva, K. Selchenok and others considered theoretical and methodological issues of the psychology of extreme situations in their research. I.Yu. Kobozev, A.P. Katunin, A.V. Kondratyev and others studied the psychological aspects of the formation of stress-resistant behaviour of employees of law enforcement units.

However, a number of problems associated with the analysis of the impact of emotional factors on employees of law enforcement units have not received proper coverage in the scientific literature up to date. The problems of reducing the negative impact of stress factors on officers, which are the subject of this article, as well as the development of stress resistance of employees of these services as the main way of maintaining their high functional activity in terms of the successful completion of professional tasks, has attracted the attention of a small number of researchers (Pravdina L. R., 2004).

## 3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In the process of evolutionary development of a person, the formation of his or her individual characteristics, emotions have played the role of a conductor, allowing to quickly and effectively satisfy all emerging needs in various life situations. On their basis, the individual makes a different assessment of relations, objects, opponents, events. It is rather difficult to overestimate the role of emotional factors in a person's life, since emotions can show a personal attitude to external and internal stimuli, without them the process of cognition and activity is impossible.

Physiological processes, that control various emotions, have a rather complex structure, appearing as a result of the influence of various irritating factors. Sometimes their appearance is provoked by irritation that occurs within the body itself (Porshukov A.S., 2020). An important role in provoking emotional reactions is played by the reticular formation of the brain stem, which, in turn, is responsible for the regulation of our behaviour.

Despite the large number of types of emotions known to the scientific community, basic ones can be distinguished, including shame, joy, surprise, suffering, anger, disgust, contempt, fear. Negative psychological factors, which include novelty, unusualness, suddenness, impetuosity, lack of time, high and prolonged loads, uncertainty, risk – are a heavy burden on the psyche, make it difficult for a subject to make decisions (Sidorenko V.A., Sukhorukov A.L., Ichitovkina E.G., Soloviev A.G., Bogdasarov Yu.V., 2020).

The professional activity of employees of law enforcement units, related to the performance of service in the sphere of fulfilling the tasks of the penal system, is very often carried out in an atmosphere of information vacuum: ambiguity, insufficient amount of information, or, conversely, an abundance of it. The task often consists not so much in clarifying the information at their disposal, as in the need to act accurately under the conditions of uncertainty of a situation (Eremeev S.G., Tyufyakov N.A., Shakhmatov A.V., 2020).

Emotional stress at work in the context of an escalating criminal situation in a correctional institution and conflicts among prisoners, public criticism of the activity of penal correction systems related to the maintenance of convicts, general socio-economic problems, often contributes to a reduction of in employees' emotional resources, the expression of professional burnout, the formation of psychosomatic and nervous - mental disorders (Latyshev A.V., 2020).

The professional activity of employees of law enforcement units has always been distinguished by the presence of a high level of stress factors. At the same time, they can be conditionally divided into two main groups: real and imaginary stress factors. Thus, the first group includes the crisis of socio-economic and moral-ethical situations in Russian society. The second group contains the psychological climate in the team, the personal qualities of employees, and so on. They are recognized as imaginary not because they are absent in reality, but because of their subjective impact on the personality. Emotional factors of this kind exert strong psychological pressure on employees of law enforcement units and, ultimately, play a negative role in a decision-making process regarding the field of professional activity, reduce work efficiency and stress resistance (Sysoeva T.A., Ovsyannikova V.V., 2017).

The role of psychologists is reduced to the study of the consequences caused at the physiological, psychological and behavioural levels, regardless of the type of these factors. Often, the consequences are negative – they are emotional shifts, a noticeable change in the processes of perception of reality, deformation of thinking and a lack of motivation. A person under the influence of stress, which has reached an affective degree, experiences its strong negative influence. In this case, the form of affective stress can be thoughtless, generalizing or inhibited (Vilenskaya G.A., 2020).

The influence of negative emotional factors contributes to the widespread of various kinds of psychosomatic disorders among the employees of law enforcement units. The cause of these problems is the prolonged pressure of dangerous impulses and states. The strong feeling of negative emotions and senses for a long period of time is often transformed into fairly stable, complex states, considered as integral, dynamic, which are already part of a personality, in different aspects reflecting the individuality of the psycho-emotional sphere of a person at every stage of his life (Gordeeva T.O., Osin E.N., Suchkov D.D., Ivanova T.Yu., Bobrov V.V., Sychev O.A., 2016).

Conflict work situations are often aggravated by the danger to life, health, financial prosperity, uncertainty of future events in the absence of a specific plan for the problem solution. Together, they provoke anxiety – a person's tendency to feel restlessness and fear in the form of a premonition of a vague, often unconscious, inevitably impending threat. Anxiety triggers the internal reserves of the human body even before the expected events occur, thereby helping to adapt to changes and this state

plays a motivating role in human behaviour, often contributing to success in the service.

The difference in the results of the impact of anxiety on a human body can be traced by analysing the duration and depth of this state, the degree of adequacy of its manifestation, the reasons, the level of self-control of a personality and the forms of emotions expression. For example, anxiety will be a positive emotional factor if it is based on the fact that the employee takes his work and the fate of convicts very close to his heart. Without this kind of emotion, successful activity is generally impossible and such anxiety should be a feature of the employee's personality, part of his character. Mild forms of anxiety help the officer eliminate mistakes at work, foster courage, decisiveness, and self-confidence. But if the employee's anxiety appears for insignificant reasons, is inadequate to the situation, leads to a loss of self-control, stretches over time, then such a state, of course, has a negative impact on professional activity. Another important factor, apparent psychological stress, has a negative impact on the working efficiency of the personnel of law enforcement units (Sidorenko V.A., Sukhorukov A.L., Ichitovkina E.G., Soloviev A.G., Bogdasarov Yu.V., 2020).

Stress is a psychoemotional state resulting from an environment of danger, increased responsibility, serious mental pressure, the need to overcome fatigue, and strong exertion. In turn, stressors are factors that put strong psychoemotional pressure on a person, complicating the functioning of the psyche. For example, failures in solving criminal acts of convicts, fear of criticism or making a responsible decision, information overload, etc. are stressors in law enforcement activities. Like anxiety, stress can have two psychological effects on a person. So, at the initial stage, it is able to mobilize the internal forces of a human body, its adaptive capabilities, the ability to make quick decisions, due to which it acts as a positive stimulus that affects the effectiveness of actions in difficult situations. Thanks to this phenomenon, especially at first, the performance indicators of the professional duties are improved in the service. However, prolonged exposure to negatively coloured emotional factors depletes the body's protective reserves, as a result of which stress can have a destructive effect on the psyche, often leading to a disorder of its activity and causing nervous breakdowns.

It is impossible not to mention one more emotionally coloured state representing professional interest for studying its influence on the employees of law enforcement units – frustration. The destructive

effects of frustration can be observed in violation of goal setting, work planning, in cognitive inhibition, in strong emotional arousal, uncontrolled or partially controlled aggressive actions. Frustration can completely erase a person's creative abilities, deprive him of an adequate understanding of what is happening, turn his actions into stereotyped and inconsistent with the situation (Shamshikova O.A., Belashina T.V., 2018).

It can be concluded that there are many negative emotional factors and psychological states in the activities of employees of law enforcement units. At the same time, in the conditions of modern reality, the success of the work performed by the officers, the high efficiency of joint well-coordinated actions, the psychological climate in the team to a greater extent depend on the skill to control their behaviour and mood, that is, on the development of the level of stress resistance (Khachaturova M.R., Fedorova A.A., 2018).

The stress resistance is one of the integral factors in the psychological preparation of employees for professional activities. This term is relatively new in psychology, it is defined as the individual ability to maintain a calm and balanced mental state in difficult conditions for successful work [3, p. 52]. Stress resistance is manifested in the person's ability to control oneself in any situation, resistance to psychological pressure, the absence of vivid negative emotional reactions to emerging difficulties. (Pravdina L.R., 2004). Stress resistance is inextricably linked with the concept of human will. The employees with a developed will have the following character traits: purposefulness, determination, perseverance, endurance and independence (Khachaturova M.R., Fedorova A.A., 2018).

In turn, the lack of individual skill not to succumb to prolonged exposure to stress factors can be interpreted as his lack of the proper level of stress resistance, which is one of the elements of the emotional and volitional sphere development. Considering the above mentioned information, stress resistance can be defined as a professionally significant quality of the personality of an employee of law enforcement units of the penal system (Antonova E.A., 2011).

Generalization of the approaches in the scientific literature allows us to conclude that stress resistance should be understood as a phenomenon capable of maintaining the human psyche in a healthy state and helping to connect the internal resources of the body to consolidate effective forms of behaviour in the fight against life's difficulties (Sysoeva T.A.,

Ovsyannikova V.V., 2017). By developing resistance to stress, a person increases the level of his emotional intelligence.

Emotional intelligence is a new term that includes the developed skill of an individual to consciously manage his own emotions, to understand and accept the emotions of the people around him. Thanks to emotional intelligence, a person has the ability to adequately analyse the situation and react correctly in the current circumstances. Using emotional intelligence, it is possible to optimize the mental state and behaviour of a person in difficult psychological situations, otherwise an individual in stress will act irrationally, sluggishly and inertly.

To neutralize stress factors in difficult conditions, the selection of personnel for law enforcement units of a correctional institution should be based on an analysis of the individual characteristics of people (their character, abilities, etc.), as well as interpersonal relationships (Kondratyeva M.V., 2013). In this case, more attention should be paid to the chief executives, as well as newly arrived employees.

An officer of law enforcement units needs to focus on a specially designed form of behaviour in extreme situations, which includes the ability not to enter a state of excessive anxiety, emotional burnout; he needs, while increasing the efficiency of his work, to independently control the health and mood.

They should also take part more often in relaxation sessions, trainings and corrective measures, which should be organized by psychologists of the penal system institutions. Among them, there should be such recreational measures as: auto-training to relieve neuromuscular tension; audio and video therapy, aroma and phytotherapy; conducting a course of psychotherapeutic sessions using body-oriented, rational, cognitive-behavioural, and other types of therapy; the use of physical exercises, breathing exercises, massage; resort to professional psychological help.

## 4 CONCLUSIONS

Summing up, it should be noted that emotions are an integral part of life, penetrating into all spheres of human activity. It can be concluded that this issue has the greatest importance for those areas of professional activity that are the most difficult to algorithmize, including the work of law enforcement officers. Currently, there is an acute need to improve the methods of forming psychological resistance to the

destructive and stressful effects of negatively coloured emotional factors on employees of law enforcement units in their professional activities.

In the course of analysing the influence of emotional factors on the employees of law enforcement units, the regularity of the appearance of possible negative emotional states as a reaction to uncertainty and danger in official activities was revealed. It was found that these dangerous impulses are complex, interdependent and can transit from one negative state to another. The study analysed the most common emotional factors that have a negative impact on the professional implementation of officers of the penal system.

The recommendations developed within the framework of this article on the psychological training of personnel, the use of special rehabilitation measures and techniques in preparing of employees and staff development, will allow the officers to improve stress resistance skills and form emotional intelligence. It can be concluded that with effective emotional-volitional and professional-psychological training, with sufficiently responsible individual work of the employee on himself, any negative effects of extreme conditions on his personality and professional behaviour will be successfully neutralized.

## REFERENCES

- Bykov, A.V., 2018. Personality as an object of intelligence criminology. *In The All-Russian criminological journal*. 12(2). pp. 157-164.
- Antonova, E.A., 2011. Emotional stability as a factor of pedagogical activity. *In Bulletin of the Saratov University. New series. Philosophy Series. Psychology. Pedagogy*.
- Eremeev, S.G., Tyufyakov, N.A., Shakhmatov, A.V., 2020. The influence of the characteristics of professional activity on the psychophysiological state of police officers. *In Psychopedagogy in law enforcement agencies*. 25-4(83). pp. 383-389.
- Goncharova, N.A., Ustyuzhanin, V.N., 2017. *Psychology in the activities of law enforcement officers: a training manual*. SPb., Publishing house of St. Petersburg University of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia. p. 176.
- Gordeeva, T.O., Osin, E.N., Suchkov, D.D., Ivanova, T.Yu., Bobrov, V.V., Sychev, O.A., 2016. Self-control as a personality resource: diagnostics and connections with success, perseverance and well-being. *In Cultural-Historical Psychology*. 12(2). pp. 46-58.
- Khachaturova, M.R., Fedorova, A.A., 2018. Influence of stress factors on the effectiveness of the assessment situation by employees with different levels of creativity. *In Social Psychology and Society*. 9(1). pp. 108-123.
- Kondratyeva, M.V., 2013. Psychological studies of the phenomenon of stress resistance in changing conditions. *In Bulletin of the North Caucasus Federal University*. 3. pp. 32-35.
- Latyshev, A.V., Latyshev, A.V., Dvortsova, E.V., 2020. The relationship between stress resistance and emotional intelligence with professional burnout of law enforcement officers. *In Young Scientist*. 20(310).
- Pravdina, L.R., 2004. *Influence of an extreme situation on the dynamics of socio-psychological characteristics of a person*. Rostov-on-Don. p. 19.
- Porshukov, A.S., 2020. Personal characteristics of the employees of the internal affairs bodies appointed to the position of the head. *In National psychological journal*. 1-1(37). pp. 107-114.
- Shamshikova, O.A., Belashina, T.V., 2018. Specificity of anger expression in extreme and crisis conditions. *In Human Ecology*. 11. pp. 44-50.
- Sidorenko, V.A., Sukhorukov, A.L., Ichitovkina, E.G., Soloviev, A.G., Bogdasarov, Yu.V., 2020. A set of interdisciplinary interaction measures to prevent suicidal behaviour in law enforcement agencies. *In Human Ecology*. 12. pp. 59-64.
- Sysoeva, T.A., Ovsyannikova, V.V., 2017. Connection of emotional personality traits and experienced emotions with the speed of processing emotional information. *In Psychology. Journal of the Higher School of Economics*. 14(2). pp. 387-399.
- Vilenskaya, G.A., 2020. Emotional regulation: factors of its development and related types of behaviour. *In Psychological journal*. 41(5). pp. 63-76.
- Zelenova, M.E., Zakharov, A.V., 2014. Burnout and stress in the context of professional health of military personnel. *In Social psychology and society*. 5(2). pp. 50-70.