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**PROFESSIONAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL TRAINING
OF THE STAFF OF STATE PENAL SERVICE OF UKRAINE
AS A MEANS OF ENSURING HIS PERSONAL SAFETY
AND RELIABILITY**

The article is devoted to the analysis of conditions ensuring psychological reliability of the personnel of the State penitentiary service of Ukraine and their personal security as well as to the role of professional and psychological training as a means of preventing commission of offences and crimes by the officers of penitentiary institutions and detention facilities.

Key words: personnel of the State penal service of Ukraine; psychological reliability; personal security.

Problem definition in general. Due to the nature of their functions, the personnel of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine is constantly in the focus of attention of criminal elements. This fact prompts the officers to choose safe behavior patterns, to notice even slight changes in service environment, to be ready to counter any manipulative actions.

Key indicators of psychological reliability of the personnel of any law enforcement agency are strict legality of their behavior, absence of incidents involving personnel or happening through their fault. Based on the above, the conditions of ensuring sustainability of the officials of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine shall be the following:

- thorough knowledge of the legal framework requirements that define the content and procedure for performing official duties by the personnel;

- own belief of officers in the need for lawful conduct, their willingness and ability to act in accordance with the law under any circumstances;

- resistance of an official to the influence of criminal actors trying to involve him or her into illegal (criminal) activity; ability to withstand psychological pressure and manipulation.

Legal awareness, sufficient regulatory and legal knowledge required for impeccable legal regulation of own behavior and official relations, making everyday and professional decision by a representative of penitentiary service is an important and fundamental prerequisite for effective execution of their socially significant functions [1]. However, the results of official investigations of extraordinary events that took place because of violating by the personnel of the penal institutions and detention facilities of the requirements of laws and regulations, show that misconduct, wrongdoings and crimes committed by them are usually triggered by negative psychological factors which primarily show signs of professional deformation and negative personal characteristics inappropriate for successful work at the governmental agency.

One of the most effective means of dealing with these negative phenomena are the lessons conducted within the system of professional training of personnel, which serve as effective tool for their psychological reliability, creating the mechanism of self-defense against committing of illegal acts and crimes, preventing their involvement in criminal activity. The topicality of the topic under discussion is proved by the fact that cases of violations of discipline and laws by the personnel of penitentiary service are far from unique. As of July 1, 2013 the total number of former employees of correctional (penitentiary) service who were serving sentences in prisons amounted to 111 persons [2].

Analysis of recent researches and publications which initiated finding solution to this problem, which serve as a basis for the author's research. The problems of providing organization professional security; of the impact of officials' negative personal traits on stability and reliability of agency functioning; of effective means selection for prevention of professional deformation of law enforcement agents – namely the internal affairs units' personnel and officials of penal institutions – under the conditions of daily professional activities and ways of correction have been considered in the research works of Yu.V.Aleksandrov, T.Yu.Vavryk, V. S. Medvedev, I. H. Chukmaryn and other researchers [3–6]. However, the problems of proving close interrelation between the instances of violations of discipline and law by the personnel of law enforcement agencies, including the officials of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine, certain negative characteristics in

the structure of potential infringers' personality and efficiency of conducting lessons in the framework of professional and psychological training system have been beyond the focus of attention.

The purpose of the article is to highlight the interrelation between the cases of offences and crimes committed by the departmental personnel and deformed (negative) traits in the structure of their personalities, as well as to analyse psychological conditions ensuring the reliability of the staff of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine, their personal safety, psychological factors preventing offences and crimes by the personnel of penal institutions and detention facilities, one of which is providing meaningful knowledge in the field of applied psychology.

Main material of the research. The risk of becoming an object of committing illegal acts and crimes, induction to violations of the norms of regulatory documents governing the performance of service duties, may await any employee of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine. Penitentiary Service agents in the course of their daily duties often encounter open or covert resistance from the criminal elements, who are trying not only to realize unlawful intents and deceive those officials, but also to make them accomplices, participants of criminal offense, or even criminal gang members, often ignoring all social norms, using strong psychological and physical pressure for that cause.

There are two types of involvement of law enforcement officials in illegal (criminal) activities in the theory and practice of criminal justice:

- The first one (universal or general) is when the actions of another person are promoting a criminal lifestyle, including recruitment of new supporters of the underworld, which contributes to deliberate enlargement of the number of criminal members, forming an independent motive or intent of such involved official to commit a certain illegal (criminal) act;

- The second one (definite) includes forcing (active suborning) to participate in a contemplated crime as an accomplice or accessory as a result of agent's legal incompetence, ignorance, insufficient experience or a number of psychological characteristics that do not allow them to fully appreciate the danger of future unlawful acts or to confidently resist such negative external impact.

The potential offenders (criminals) are considered to be random, and their actions contradict general orientation of their personality. [7]

In the first case of involving of law enforcement officers into illegal or criminal activities and motivating them to violate the laws and administrative regulations, the objects of external impact are usually the officers with obvious signs of professional deformation, due to which situational reaction of the agents is hebetated, which leads to the overestimation (underestimation) of own abilities and, as a result, to non-optimal or even erroneous actions and decisions. It is important that, emerging stealthily, such adverse changes, in general, have sustainable constant trend. Herewith, such official often strongly denies the need for any adjustments to the structure of the self, which, even at the mid-level stage of professional deformation development, is characterized by significant quantitative and qualitative changes in them: hypertrophic accented features, discontinued personal development, rapid degradation. Using knowledge of the main secrets of professional activity, such officers start to neglect official rules and obligations due to sordid motives, giving own interpretation to them, having no fear to bear disciplinary or even criminal liability for such actions. Deforming changes in the image of «Self», i.e. overstated or understated self-esteem, lead to perception of criticism and social control as factors that prevent «normal» work organization. In case if there are no significant constraints (such as fear of being punished for significant drawbacks in service activity, being resigned or losing reputation), which will eventually become less deterring, such officials turns into a handy tool of achieving pernicious purposes of criminal elements. Often law enforcement agents with deformed personality do not observe the destructive effects of their wrongful acts. Failures in the course of performing of professional duties are explained as accidental, caused by unfavorable external circumstances or bad luck. Subjectively, this phenomenon is associated with activation of the mechanism of psychological defense, domination of illusory vision of reality and self, utter self-justification.

Deformational changes deeply affect the whole person, leading to the vanishing of internal barriers that prevent subjective interpretation of the content of law-abiding behavior. Officials begin to evaluate themselves as consummate professionals, showing condescending and dismissive attitude to the opinions that do not

coincide with their own position. In this situation, the deformed features and qualities of personality start to function in autonomous mode, not simply waiting for favorable actualization conditions but rather searching for them, specifically creating situations for their own expression.

Formed psychological immunity to stressful factors, the habit of daily close interaction with criminal elements, acquired professionally deformed qualities mentioned above, dim the perception of approaching personal danger, preventing the establishment and operation of effective system of self defense that would function in the legal and psychological field.

The situation is complicated by the fact that, as a rule, at a deep level of professional deformation officials develop deviant behavior patterns (a habit to overcome stress conditions using alcohol, narcotics and psychotropic substances, addiction to gambling, etc.), which speeds up and simplifies the external negative psychological impact upon them. In psychology, behavioral deviations are considered from the perspective of meeting the criteria that display decrease in quality of life, reduction of critical attitude to their own behavior, cognitive distortions (perception and understanding of reality), emotional disorders, social disadaptation up to complete isolation of personality [8]. Given the deterioration of the living conditions, the deviation in behavior may become pathological, transforming the agents into objects of medical research. It may also develop into a sustainable somatic and mental illness: alcoholism, drug addiction, gambling, etc.

So, professionally deformed personalities are attractive objects for committing offences or crimes in relation to them or with their participation. Such persons much easier yield to negative impact of third parties for the purpose of their involvement in illegal (criminal) activity than, for example, officials who do not have significant life or professional experience.

Considering the second kind of involvement of law enforcement officers into illegal (criminal) activities, officials usually act as law-abiding, responsible persons diligently performing their functional duties. However, along with the legal ignorance, that may be similar for both unabiding and law-abiding subjects, the latter have certain psychological differences that can make them potential offenders or criminals. It is difficult to understand the

motives of illegal acts of such officials who generally look satisfactory. Typically, these representatives of departmental personnel commit offenses or crimes under the negative impact of asocial elements as a result of their victimization based on conformity and increased suggestibility.

In the positive sense conformity is understood as a mechanism that maintains stability of a team, ensuring its unity, unified behavior and fulfilment of guidelines, adherence to certain rules of collective existence. At the same time it must be emphasized that officials with high conformity level must be in the focus of constant supervisor's attention to ensure the conditions for timely adoption of organizational and practical measures to prevent committing of unlawful acts or offenses by them or against them.

Another psychological feature that may indicate official's victimization, as mentioned above, is increased suggestibility, that is easy psychoemotional response to external stimuli. Insensibility, indifference, lack of empathy, disregard to problems of other people are not positive traits of employees of governmental institutions who must serve the interests of society and ordinary citizens. However, the official authorities of penal institutions and detention facilities taking into consideration the specificity of their professional activities should treat all interpersonal contacts both at home and professional environment with great cautiousness to prevent the implementation of suggestive influence against them, aimed at creation of a particular emotional state that would contribute to the incorrect interpretation of the described problem situation – the desire to break the current legislative requirements to grant a «necessary favour» to a criminal [9].

An effective means of preventing the rapid process of the penitentiary service personnel professional deformation, accumulation of the necessary knowledge base about the role of professionally important qualities in the successful performance of the service duties assigned to the agents during the whole term of their service, the sequence of actions in difficult and extreme circumstances under the conditions of penal institutions normal functioning are the lessons conducted within the system of professional and psychological training of departmental staff. Put into practice, the knowledge in the field of applied psychology shall allow acting with confidence in emergency situations, preserving

own psychological resources while maintaining the security of the organization functioning.

As practice shows, it is quite possible to reduce the likelihood of emergency situations among the staff of penal institutions and detention facilities, including violations of discipline and law, if we specifically educate the representatives of departmental personnel, forming the necessary base of knowledge about personality traits which serve as favourable conditions for such shameful cases as well as of ways which help to block the negative external impacts. Agents armed with psychological knowledge when facing with extreme circumstances are capable of showing the features of high psychological stability, maintaining self-control and self-restraint that will ensure their personal safety and security.

Due to the specific functioning of the penitentiary department, extremely important is the issue of developing a course of lectures and practical lessons to inform the departmental employees about the dangers and consequences of the perception of psychological external impact, especially the one that is aimed at administrative officials of governmental agency with a view to their involvement in the illegal (criminal) activities, unpunished committing of offences and crimes with their assistance. Each acting officer of penitentiary institution must have a clear idea about the features of provocative behavior, conditions of negative traits formation that would hinder the effective performance of their duties, in order to timely detect them in the structure of their own personality and prevent using them by criminal elements for sordid motives.

Conclusions. In view of the above, there is a clear need for any official of the Penitentiary Service to master the knowledge in the field of applied psychology. The main mechanism to combat any negative psychological effects, in particularly victimization, deformation of professionally important qualities of a penitentiary system official, is the knowledge about the fact of their existence and self-correction techniques, formed ability to promptly identify the origin of negative psycho-emotional impacts and to contrast their own counter-manipulation mechanisms. Thus, the first condition of successful work in the direction of emergency events prevention in the teams of employees of penal institutions and detention facilities is acquisition by the officials of the Penitentiary Service of the

psychological knowledge necessary to help ensure personal safety and psychological reliability of departmental staff.

Prospects for further research in this field are seen in the creation of the necessary courses of professional and psychological training of the personnel of the State Penitentiary Service of Ukraine, determining the criteria for their effectiveness assessment.

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