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## Prevention of Professional Destructions of Penal System Employees as a Factor of Successful Professional Activity

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#### Abstract

*Introduction:* this article is devoted to the study of professional destructions of penal system employees, their prevention and relationship with success. This problem is particularly relevant, since professional activities of penal system employees are associated with difficult working conditions that require increased responsibility, psycho-emotional stability and high stress tolerance. *Purpose:* on the basis of theoretical and empirical research to determine directions of preventive measures to avert professional destructions of penal system employees as effective performance factors. *Methods:* psychodiagnostics with the use of the following techniques: V.V. Boiko's method of diagnosing the emotional burnout level, K. Maslach's method of diagnosing the professional burnout level, Yu.V. Shcherbatykh's stress tolerance test, A.B. Leonova's questionnaire "Degree of chronic fatigue", A.V. Batarшева's questionnaire "Integral work satisfaction", the method of expert assessments. *Results:* the article suggests that professional destructions of penal system employees have a number of features due to the specifics of professional activity. These problems are of particular importance for employees who work for a long time. It is this category of employees that is most at risk of professional destructions. Risks of professional destructions are revealed both in the professional activity of penal system employees and outside it. However, the relationship between the occurrence of professional deformations and the effectiveness of professional activity of penal system employees is proven. *Conclusion:* since professional destructions in the most general form are realized

in all spheres of a person's life, it is not correct to consider them separately from personal characteristics of a particular employee. Prevention of the occurrence of professional destructions should not be situational in nature, but should be regular and comprehensive. Prevention of professional destructions is more effective when it is implemented in various spheres (cultural, sports, creative, etc.), since it should be, on the one hand, large-scale and, on the other hand, personalized. Optimization of work tasks and harmonization of free time of penal system employees also reduce risks of professional destructions.

**Keywords:** professional activity; professional destructions; mental burnout; emotional burnout; employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service; activity effectiveness; prevention.

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#### *Introduction*

Professional activity of penal system employees imposes special requirements on their personal and professional qualities. Of course, the distinction between personal and professional is rather conditional, since a personality undergoes various transformations in the process of life. Some personality traits develop, others deform. Mutual influence of personal and professional qualities is obvious.

Professional activity of penal system employees refers to conventional types of activities. This type of activity assumes its clear structuring, efficiency and conservatism in decision-making. Consequently, the approach to solving emerging problems is often stereotypical, practical and concrete. Thus, constant solution of the same tasks in professional activity leads to professional fatigue, decreased variability of ways of performing activities, loss or deformation of professional skills and abilities, as well as lower efficiency. All this inevitably leads to the emergence of professional destructions, the key element of which is an increasing sense of exhaustion of the emotional resources of a professional [1].

S.P. Beznosov considered professional deformations as an objective phenomenon, the negative effects of which could be eliminated only through other, non-professional factors [2].

According to E.F. Zeer, professionally conditioned destructions are gradually accumulated

changes in the existing structure of the activity and personality that negatively affect labor productivity, interaction with other participants in this process, as well as development of the personality itself [3].

A.K. Markova, having generalized studies of violations of professional personality development, identified the following trends of professional destructions:

- lagging and slowing down of professional development in comparison with age and social norms;
- disintegration of professional development, breakdown of professional consciousness and, as a result, unrealistic goals, false meanings of work and professional conflicts;
- low professional mobility, inability to adapt to new working conditions and maladaptation;
- inconsistency of individual links of professional development, when one area seems to be getting ahead of itself, and the other is lagging behind (for example, there is motivation for professional growth, but the lack of a holistic professional consciousness is an obstacle to it);
- weakening of previous professional skills, professional abilities and professional thinking;
- distorted professional development, appearance of previously absent negative qualities, deviations from social and individual norms of professional development that change the personality profile;

- appearance of personality deformations (for example, emotional exhaustion and burn-out), as well as a flawed professional attitude;
- termination of professional development due to occupational diseases or disability [4].

The professional activity of employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service is accompanied by various stress factors. These include danger, suddenness, uncertainty, novelty of means and methods of implementing activities in extreme conditions, an increased pace of action, as well as a shortage of time.

Based on the above factors, we can state that penal service is, in essence, extreme. In addition, the extreme nature of the service is associated with the possible use of weapons, which has a negative impact on the emotional state of employees, quality of social interaction, mental and somatic health, their psychological stability and professional performance. The professional activity of employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service is realized in objectively specified complex conditions that require a balance of diverse, often paradoxically combined personal qualities and properties, the formation and development of which is possible only in the process of long and laborious training [5]. In this regard, the improvement of personnel selection is of great importance. In this situation, a crucial role is played by the forecast of professional activity effectiveness, which is becoming increasingly dependent on internal capacities of the individual.

Nowadays, the problem of successful professional performance is being actively developed in psychology. In Russia this issue is presented in the works of A.A. Bodalev, V.A. Bodrov, K.M. Gurevich, I.A. Zhdanov, E.P. Il'in, L.A. Kopytova, M.A. Kotik, A.M. Emel'yanov, L.S. Nersisyan, O.A. Konopkin, A.A. Rean, V.I. Chirkov and others [6].

Various aspects of the problem under consideration are studied by psychologists of law enforcement agencies and reflected, as a rule, in special literature (V.S. Berdnikov, E.S. Kazur-

ova, A.V. Kokurin, V.R. Safonov, V.N. Smirnov, etc.). It is shown that one of the most important factors of successful professional performance are human resource capabilities, which involve the use of self-regulation of states and activities, as well as the development of certain psychological qualities that actually determine the effectiveness of human activity and behavior in extreme situations [7].

The authors of the article try to identify the relationship between indicators of successful professional performance and components of professional destructions, as well as determine directions of preventive measures to alert professional destructions of penal system employees as factors of their performance.

Psychodiagnostics was conducted on the basis of the following techniques: V.V. Boyko's method of diagnosing the level of emotional burnout, K. Maslach's method of diagnosing the level of professional burnout, Yu.V. Shcherbatykh's stress tolerance test, A.B. Leonova's questionnaire "Degree of chronic fatigue", A.V. Batarшева's questionnaire "Integral work satisfaction", method of expert assessments for studying effectiveness of professional activity (such parameters as efficiency of activity, speed of problem solving, absence of errors, emotional well-being, etc. were evaluated as criteria). Mathematical and statistical data processing was performed on the basis of MS Office Excel, IBM SPSS, and Statistica 10.0 (Pearson correlation coefficient).

*Results and their discussion*

The empirical part of our study involved 40 employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service aged 35–45 years with more than 5 years of work experience. According to Yaroslavl psychologist V.E. Orel, it is 5 years that is the period when the level of burnout manifests itself in professional activity. When studying emotional burnout of penal system employees, we used V.V. Boiko's methodology and got the following results (Table 1).

Table 1

*Study of the emotional burnout development phases of penal system employees*

Stress phase	Resistance phase	Exhaustion phase
75	55	40

The conducted research shows the stress phase has formed among the surveyed. This type of stress is a predictor of professional destructions appearance; it is not constant, but has a dynamic character. The resistance phase is in the process of formation, since the respondents strive to avoid psychological discomfort associated with the performance of routine everyday tasks and reduce the pressure of external circumstances with the help

of possible means. The exhaustion phase is also in the process of formation, which, in our opinion, reflects the specifics of professional activity, since emotional protection in the form of burnout prevents implementation of professional activity.

It seems interesting to us to consider in more detail the severity of the symptoms of each phase in the structure of the burnout syndrome (Table 2).

*Table 2*

*Study of symptoms in the structure of the emotional burnout development phases of penal system employees*

Stress phase	Symptom of "experiencing traumatic circumstances"	18
	Symptom of "dissatisfaction with oneself"	14
	Symptom of "being trapped in a cage"	19
	Symptom of "anxiety and depression"	24
Resistance phase	Symptom of "inadequate selective emotional response"	14
	Symptom of "emotional and moral disorientation"	12
	Symptom of "expanding the sphere of saving emotions"	21
	Symptom of "reduction of professional responsibilities"	8
Exhaustion phase	Symptom of "emotional deficit"	12
	Symptom of "emotional detachment"	10
	Symptom of "personal detachment, or depersonalization"	10
	Symptom of "psychosomatic and psychovegetative disorders"	8

The qualitative analysis of the severity of symptoms in the structure of the burnout syndrome shows the dominance of the symptom of anxiety and depression of the stress phase. In our opinion, it is connected with the implementation of professional activity in particularly complicated conditions, prompting emotional burnout as a means of psychological protection. The specifics of professional activity of penal system employees can be a trigger of psychoemotional tension in the form of experiencing situational or personal anxiety, disappointment in oneself, profession or a specific type of professional activity. Also, the symptom of expanding the sphere of saving emotions indicates the transfer of profes-

sional relations to personal ones. The formation of this symptom indicates the need for preventive work not only in the professional aspect, but also in the context of the development of professionally important personal qualities.

To calculate the level of professional burnout, we used the Maslach Burnout Inventory. It was worked out in 1986 by C. Maslach and S. Jackson, adapted in Russia by N.E. Vodop'yanova in 2001, supplemented in 2007 with a mathematical model developed by the Saint Petersburg Bekhterev Psychoneurological Research Institute (E.I. Lozinskaya et al.). After conducting an empirical study, the following results were obtained (Table 3).

Table 3

*Study of professional burnout of employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service*

Emotional exhaustion	Depersonalization	Reduction of professionalism
27	10	13

The conducted empirical research reveals that emotional exhaustion dominates in the structure of the three-dimensional construct of professional burnout of penal system employees. It is manifested in a drop in emotional tone, mental exhaustion and affective lability, "satiety" with activities (professional and other), or refusal of this activity, as well as a decrease in

life satisfaction in general. However, the indicators of depersonalization and reduction of professionalism are within the statistical norm.

To study stress resistance of penal system employees, we used the method of Yu.V. Shcherbatykh. It evaluates both the overall level of stress resistance and its individual components (Table 4).

Table 4

*Study of the components of stress resistance of penal system employees*

Circumstances	Increasing complexity	Psychosomatics	Destructive overcoming	Constructive overcoming
42	20	15	40	23

The results presented above show that penal system employees are characterized by a high orientation to circumstances, that is, they tend to react emotionally to circumstances that are difficult or impossible for them to influence. Besides, the indicators of destructive overcoming of stressful situations are high, that is, penal system employees prefer self-destructive forms of coping with stress. Undoubtedly, destructive overcoming is different, ranging from stress-induced snacking to alcohol consumption or smoking. Though the final integral

indicator of stress resistance is normal, the qualitative analysis of scales allows us to draw conclusions about the need to prevent destructive ways of coping with stress and form constructive coping strategies.

To identify preclinical degrees of chronic fatigue of penal system employees, we used the questionnaire "Degree of chronic fatigue" by A.B. Leonova. For the convenience of graphical representation of the data, we will present them as a percentage expression of the scales from their maximum value (Table 5).

Table 5

*Study of chronic fatigue of penal system employees*

Symptoms of physiological discomfort	Decreased general well-being and cognitive discomfort	Disorders in the emotional and affective sphere	Decreased motivation and changes in social communication
35%	30%	75%	80%

When studying components of chronic fatigue of penal system employees, a decrease in motivation and changes in the sphere of social communication were found. These factors can significantly reduce employees' performance and sometimes lead to "refusal" to carry out activities. Also, the rates of possible violations in the emotional-affective sphere are high, which, despite the fact that they can ease tension, they are still destructive and can lead to conflicts.

Therefore, timely diagnosis of chronic fatigue is extremely important to organize preventive and corrective measures for suppressing professional destructions and maintaining general human performance.

Based on the theoretical analysis of the literature, we considered the relationship between components of professional destructions and successful performance of penal system employees.

To describe effective performance of professional duties and achieve optimal results, the concept of professional effectiveness is used. However, the criteria for professional effectiveness in any kind of activity are not defined, since success for oneself and success for others can often be diametrically opposed.

A number of foreign psychologists, in particular American psychologists D. Verung, A. Makrimman and H. Schroeder, consider professional effectiveness through differentiation of abilities, knowledge, skills and abilities of employees that contribute to the qualitative performance of their professional duties and solving professional tasks. Other scientists, in particular, an American psychologist, specialist in the field of motivation J. Atkins, a leading representative of pragmatism and functionalism W. James, as well as a German and American psychologist, author of the concept of group dynamics and psychological field theory K. Lewin, pay attention to the phenomena of motivation to achieve success or avoid failure, as well as self-esteem and the level of claims.

There is no common understanding of effectiveness among representatives of the Russian psychological school. M.V. Teplinskikh, I.B. Khrapenko, I.V. Arendachuk, A.N. Elizarov, M.N. Boldinova and others determine effectiveness criteria and its content characteristics.

We back the definition of professional effectiveness proposed by E.A. Rodionova. It is a complex of high personal results acquired in the course of professional activity.

To study the integral satisfaction with professional activities, we used the method developed by A.V. Batarshev and the method of expert assessments.

Since maximum values vary in the subscales of A.V. Batarshev's methodology, we introduced a correction factor for each scale (for clarity of presentation of graphical data). The correction coefficient is 1 for scales 1, 3 and 4, 1.5 – for scales 2, 5, 6 and 7, and 3 – for Scale 8.

When studying the integral satisfaction with professional activities of penal system employees using the method of A.V. Batarshev, we obtained the following results (Table 6).

Table 6

Study of integral satisfaction with professional activities of penal system employees

Interest in work	Satisfaction with achievements in work	Satisfaction with relationships with colleagues	Satisfaction with relationships with authorities	Level of aspiration in professional activity	Preference for work performed to high earnings	Satisfaction with working conditions	Professional responsibility
2.4	2.2	3.4	2	3	2.4	2.6	2.8

Thus, when conducting professional activities, penal system employees are more satisfied with their relationships with colleagues. The level of aspiration is also worth mentioning. Penal system employees are least satisfied with the relationship with authorities and achievements in professional activities. However, it should also be noted that the integral

satisfaction indicator is within the statistical norm.

As an expert assessment, we used an author's questionnaire with criteria of external and internal effectiveness. Employees' immediate supervisors were experts. As a result of the expert evaluation, the following results were obtained (Table 7).

Table 7

Study of professional activity effectiveness of penal system employees

Completely successful	Rather successful	Rather unsuccessful	Completely unsuccessful
15%	40%	40%	5%

The presented data show that most experts try to avoid categorical statements. In their opinion, only 15% of the penal system em-

ployees consider themselves fully successful in professional activities, 40% – rather unsuccessful and 40% – rather successful, and only

5% – completely unsuccessful. To determine the relationship between professional activity effectiveness and professional destructions, we used the Pearson correlation coefficient. This analysis helps establish direct relationships between variables by their absolute values. For  $n=20$   $r_{cv}=0.44$  (at  $p\leq 0.05$ ) and  $r_{cv}=0.56$  (at  $p\leq 0.01$ ).

As a result of the correlation analysis, we established the following significant relationships.

Indicators of interest in the work according to A.V. Batrashev's method positively correlate with indicators of constructive overcoming stress ( $r= 0.64$ ) and negatively with indicators of anxiety and depression of the stress phase according to Boiko's method ( $r= -0.52$ ). Satisfaction with relationships with employees inversely correlates with indicators of violations in the emotional-affective sphere according to A.B. Leonova's method ( $r= -0.58$ ), indicators of emotional exhaustion according to K. Maslach's method ( $r= -0.49$ ) and indicators of success according to expert assessment ( $r= -0.70$ ). A positive correlation on this scale is observed with constructive overcoming of a stressful situation ( $r =0.50$ ). The level of aspiration in professional activity negatively correlates with indicators of symptoms of being trapped in a cage ( $r= -0.44$ ), expanding the sphere of saving emotions ( $r= -0.57$ ) according to Boiko's method, reduction of professional responsibilities according to K. Maslach's method ( $r= -0.45$ ), as well as circumstantial reaction to stress according to the method Yu.V. Shcherbatykh ( $r=-0.52$ ).

The World Health Organization recommends the following strategies for primary prevention of burnout syndrome for medical workers, which, in our opinion, are also suitable for penal system employees:

1. Avoiding making too high demands on people who help other people.
2. Ensuring an even distribution of satisfying tasks among employees.
3. Training of employees in time allocation and relaxation techniques.
4. Modification of works that cause too much stress.
5. Promoting formation of support groups.
6. Encouraging employees to participate in decision-making affecting working conditions, etc.

Measures aimed at preventing professional destructions should cover personal, organizational and social aspects of each employee's activities. Key prevention directions are the following:

- 1) improving the quality of professional selection of employees;
- 2) educational activities aimed at increasing a conscious attitude to one's physical and mental health;
- 3) increasing stress resistance;
- 4) formation of a positive attitude to professional activity;
- 5) early diagnosis of the syndrome and correction of professional deformations;
- 6) optimization of joint activities and building favorable relationships in the team, etc.

In our opinion, it is possible to single out psychological, psychophysical and hygienic directions in the system of preventive measures.

The psychological direction of prevention is aimed at maximizing mental and personal health of penal system employees. Psychological prevention is aimed at admonishing possible deviations in the mental state, creating psychological conditions that are as favorable as possible for implementing professional activities. It includes psychological hygiene, psychological diagnostics, psychological counseling, psychological trainings, psychological education, and psychological correction. Psychological prevention of professionally conditioned destructions in the Federal Penitentiary Service is aimed at elaborating and implementing training programs to develop socio-psychological competence and psychological culture; working out and implementing psychological projects to prevent maladaptation and behavioral disorders. Conducting psychodiagnostics helps identify psychophysiological and personal characteristics of penal system employees and prevent development of profession-related personality deformations.

Psychophysical prevention is a complex of hygienic, pedagogical and socio-psychological measures to prevent profession-related destructions and eliminate risk factors for their occurrence. Current methods and means of psychophysical prevention are the following: psychophysical training and psychophysical exercises, relaxation gymnastics and other relaxation techniques, palming, autogenic train-

ing, yoga, breathing exercises, and physical exercises. Physical exercises for the prevention of professional deformities include exercises aimed at relieving tension in the shoulder girdle, exercises that promote blood circulation in the legs, exercises that normalize cerebral circulation, exercises that help relieve fatigue after prolonged work, exercises aimed at improving blood supply to the brain, exercises for various parts of the spine, as well as exercises for the eyes.

The reason for many professionally caused destructions is not compliance with the rules of a healthy lifestyle. Therefore, employees of the Federal Penitentiary Service should acquire knowledge, skills and abilities in organizing hygienic measures of healthy lifestyle. Hygienic means of prevention of professionally conditioned destructions are the following: prevention of bad habits, hardening of the body, self-massage, regular sleep and wake schedule, compliance with rational nutrition principles.

The main means of preventing profession-related destructions and increasing labor productivity during the working day is industrial gymnastics, that is, a set of physical exercises that are performed by penal system employees at the workplace and are included in the working day mode in order to increase efficiency, strengthen health and prevent fatigue. There are the following forms of industrial gymnastics: introductory gymnastics, physical training break, physical training minute, micropause of active recreation, health-improving and preventive gymnastics, restorative and preventive gymnastics.

Thus, technologies for the prevention of profession-related destructions of penal system employees include health-improving and preventive measures of psychological, psychophysical and hygienic orientation, as well as prevention of destructive professionalization during the working day.

#### Conclusion

The results of theoretical and empirical research confirm risks of professional destructions in the most general form. Since professional destructions are realized in all spheres of a person's life, it is not possible to consider them separately from personal characteristics of a particular employee. The empirical research shows significant relationships between various components of professional destructions and effectiveness of professional activity. Despite the fact that this relationship seems obvious, concretization of correlation of specific components seems to be a significant task. The importance of preventive measures to counteract professional destructions and, ultimately, boost performance of penal system employees is obvious. However, prevention of the occurrence of professional destructions of penal system employees should not be situational in nature, but should be regular and comprehensive. Prevention of professional destructions is more effective when it is implemented in various spheres (cultural, sports, creative, etc.), since it should be, on the one hand, large-scale and, on the other hand, personalized. Optimization of work tasks and harmonization of free time of penal employees also reduce risks of professional destructions.

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