



Psychological Aspects of Analyzing and Assessing the Current State of Personnel Provision of the Penal System

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Abstract

Introduction: the problem of personnel shortage in the penal system is complex and requires implementation of economic, educational, organizational, legal and other social measures. In solving this problem, an important role belongs to complex studies of various branches of scientific knowledge. In particular, specific features of the psychological study of the personnel structure in order to determine personal and professional qualities of employees, their professional attitudes regarding those necessary for the successful solution of large and complex tasks have applied potential. The above circumstances determine the advisability of developing new approaches to the study of the issues under consideration, in particular, they require research into the creation of favorable working and living conditions in the context of securing experienced and qualified workers in the staff in the modern conditions of the labor market. *Purpose:* to study ideas about professional activities of the penal system employees on the example of the Southern Federal District of the Russian Federation, to determine their generalized personality profile, to identify their professional attitudes and opinions regarding their individual professional career and current problems of the legal institution of personnel recruitment in the penal system as a whole; to determine current risks of "potential staff turnover", to assess them by identifying and defining the signs that influence this social phenomenon. *Methods:* theoretical analysis, comparative analysis, online survey, statistical method, ranking method. *Results:* methods of studying a candidate for service in the penal system play a significant role, taking into account modern realities of the functioning of correctional institutions. It is crucial to timely assess "potential staff turnover" and identify signs that influence the subjective attitude of the employee. The signs include guaranteed confidence in the future, prestige of service in the penal system, its social approval, a competitive level of cash payments, and social guarantees. It is necessary to pay attention to penal system employees' motivation to serve, the ability to fulfill their mission of rehabilitation and adaptation of criminals to integration into society. *Conclusions:* guidelines for solving the problems of the modern Russian penitentiary system should be based on an integrated approach to solving the key problem – staffing of institutions and bodies of the penal sys-

tem: selection of candidates for service, selection and placement of personnel, adaptation, prevention of staff turnover.

Key words: public and state security; staffing; penal system; staff turnover; penal system employee; career guidance; personal and professional qualities

5.1.2. Public law (state-legal) sciences.

5.3.9. Legal psychology and security psychology

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Introduction

In modern conditions of transformations, expansion of the sphere of rationalized application of coercive measures, and improvement of the functions of the penal system of the Russian Federation, the relevance of studying the staffing of this type of law enforcement activity increases and the social importance of the institution of execution of punishments skyrockets. The adoption of the Federal Law “On Probation in the Russian Federation” can be defined as a new stage in the development of society, its fundamental goals and objectives are aimed at working out new conceptual approaches to the rational application of coercive measures, measures of correctional, social and other nature, as well as measures to stimulate law-abiding behavior.

The management of the Federal Penitentiary Service pays constant attention to the introduction of new correctional technologies for work with convicts, the creation of conditions for providing comprehensive assistance to released persons, the use of information technologies and scientific achievements in the implementation of social behavior correction programs. The solution of these tasks is an essential component of ensuring state and public security in the long term.

The main resource for achieving the set goals are penal system employees, their potential, personal and business qualities as a significant factor and condition for ensuring the fulfillment of state functions in accordance with the assigned powers. The staff shortage in the penal system causes concern, since it leads to the overwork of employees, their physical and psychological fatigue, as well as the complication of the work of lawyers, investigators, and judges. The Director of the Federal Penitentiary

Service A.A. Gostev in his report on the results of work in 2023 and the main tasks for 2024 at the extended collegium voiced the problematic issues, including the shortage of staff in the Federal Penitentiary Service (for the past year it increased to 19%), stated the need to continue work on improving the conditions of service, staffing and training of personnel.

The formulated sum of available knowledge characterizes the problem as the core of the present research aimed at its resolution. It is worth noting that some issues of the problem under study have been subjected to studies that have significantly approached their resolution. Thus, the authors point out that the development of the penal system and its compliance with the needs of Russian society and international standards is impossible without the training of personnel capable of optimizing the activities of its structural units in fundamentally new social conditions, taking into account the psychological and pedagogical training of employees [1]. O.V. Kochkina conducts a comprehensive analysis of organizational and legal activities on staffing and proposes to create a system for assessing the effectiveness of staffing activities of penal institutions and bodies [2]. The paper considers personnel activities in bodies and institutions of the penal system, reveals the causes of staff turnover and the main factors of personnel risks in the penal system, and also reveals the role of mentoring in the process of socio-psychological adaptation to professional activity [3–5]. At the same time, the researchers also pay attention to the indicators of personnel composition of territorial bodies, and on the basis of a survey of dismissed employees identify one of the main reasons for the outflow of professionally trained personnel – salary [6]. Researchers discuss introduc-

tion of the institute of probation and study issues of training personnel capable of providing comprehensive assistance to suspected, accused, convicted people and persons released from serving a sentence [7], as well as analyze prospects for the development of the probation service, such as establishing a system of qualification requirements for the positions of the probation service, solving the issues of proper material and resource and scientific support, the need to improve the normative and legal framework of the probation service [8–10]. The authors rightfully consider psychological aspects of staff turnover and the importance of non-material stimulation of personnel [11], the psychological content of professional competence of employees of the penal system [12–15]. It is repeatedly emphasized that the strategy of personnel training as a whole should provide a stable and optimally balanced staff composition, professional performance by the employees of the penal system of their official tasks in both normal and complex operational conditions [16; 17]. It is postulated that along with personnel work it is necessary to carry out psychological support of personnel, including psychological diagnostics and other psychological procedures, because the quality of service is influenced by psychological factors, for example, the level of psychological stability and ability to cope with stress or psychological well-being of the employee in general [18; 19].

Foreign researchers note similar problems in this direction [20–23]. To date, penitentiary institutions in a number of European countries face great problems due to the lack of staff, poor quality relations between staff and prisoners, difficulties in performing the rehabilitation work expected of them, they believe that it is necessary to improve the training of prison staff [24]. Specialists underline the necessity of developing eligibility criteria for the initial selection of staff and the importance of moral and professional orientations of those entering the service. The ability of correctional officers to fulfill their mission to rehabilitate and safely reintegrate offenders into society is critical. It is reasonable to test values, knowledge and capabilities of penal system employees during their initial training to ensure that applicants have a realistic understanding of prisons, have visited prisons and understand the nuances of prison

life. Foreign researchers consider the presence of rational grounds for candidates to be especially valuable, for example, life experience is necessary to build constructive relationships with prisoners, personal safety, overcoming criticism, comfort in the work environment. Life experience is desirable for working with inmates in prison spaces to prevent destructive actions, causing riots, violations of the regime and security and safety of the facility [25].

Procedure and methods of the empirical study.

The purpose of the empirical study is to consider perceptions of the professional sphere of life of penal system employees on the example of the Southern Federal District of the Russian Federation, to determine their generalized profile, to conduct subsequent analysis of personal and professional status, and to identify professional attitudes and opinions about individual professional career and current problems of staffing of the penal system in general on the basis of self-reports.

In order to realize this goal, an author's questionnaire including 28 open-ended and closed-ended questions was compiled and posted in Google form, and an anonymous survey was conducted.

Description of the study sample. The sample covers 70 penal system employees aged 23–50 years, 74% of them are men and 26% women, the average age is 32 ± 7 .

47% of the respondents are married, 19% is in unregistered relations, 34% is single or divorced, 15% of the married employees note that their marriage is repeated. 47% of the respondents are raising one child, 19% – two children, 3% of respondents – three or more children, and 31% of the respondents have no children.

69% of the respondents have higher professional education, of them 48% of the respondents have higher legal education, 27% – higher pedagogical or psychological education, and 25% – higher technical education. 31% of the respondents have a secondary level of education. At the same time, 19% of the respondents received education in departmental higher education institutions, 81% – in “civil” educational institutions.

According to the length of service in the penal system, the respondents are distributed as follows: 50% of the respondents have up

to three years of service, 7% – three to seven years of service, 29% – seven to fifteen years of service, and 14% – fifteen years of service or more. 39% of the respondents joined the penal system immediately after their education or military service.

It should be noted that 43% of the survey participants have not changed their place of work during their professional career. Other respondents note career growth (4%), conditions of employment (4%), relocation (8%) and low wages as the main reasons for changing their place of work (13% of the married/remarried respondents with children have changed their main place of work up to three or four times).

At present, 50% of the respondents are serving in the correctional facility, 26% – in pre-trial detention centers, 14% – in territorial bodies, 10% – other structures, respectively. 14% of the respondents work as heads of detachments, 29% – as inspectors of security departments, the rest hold positions of educators, educational psychologists, duty assistants to the head of the institution and others.

Results of the study of employees' perceptions of service in the penal system and their professional path. The analysis of motives for service in the penal system reveals that it is early retirement (39% of the respondents), the possibility of professional growth and development (23%), stable salary (20%), and proximity to work from home (19%). Some of the respondents mention such motives as guaranteed confidence in the future (16%), prestige of service and its social approval (7%). Among the answers there are indications that the choice of service in the penal system was accidental (6%), as well as non-standard responses, "I consider my head as a competent specialist" (6%), "there is an opportunity to defend a thesis" (1%), "it was interesting to see how things are from the inside" (1%).

The respondents got employed in the penal system due to:

- recommendations from friends, acquaintances, relatives (61%);
- recommendations of employees working in the penal system (23%);
- advertisements of existing vacancies, including on the websites of organizations (14%);

- recruitment from higher education institutions (7%);
- assistance of state agencies (employment services) (3%).

The opinions of employees about prospects of continuing their service (answers to the question "How long do you plan to work in the penal system?") can be conditionally summarized as follows:

- first, the interviewees focus on their own well-being and professional competence: "as long as I am able" (36%), "as long as my competencies and knowledge correspond to the position I hold in the penal system" (26%);
- second, it is about orientation to the stipulated (limited) term of service and obtaining social guarantees: "as soon as I reach the age of service entitling me to a pension, I will leave immediately" (24%);
- third, some employees admit to looking for another job: "I will quit as soon as a better-paid job is offered" (19%), "I am constantly looking for an alternative to this job" (4%).

The question about wages is important for the respondents; the topic of allowances is repeatedly mentioned in the answers to open-ended questions. The respondents note that in the modern life realities it is necessary to increase the level of monetary payments. Thus, they would like to receive the following allowances: from 70,000 to 100,000 rubles (66%), from 100,000 to 120,000 rubles (6%), from 120,000 and more (28%).

As for the question "Is it possible, in your opinion, that you will come back to serve in the penal system after dismissal?", 33% of the respondents answer positively, 37% – negatively, and 30% of the respondents are unsure of the answer.

The attractiveness of service in the penal system and employees' attitude towards a professional career in the law enforcement system are indirectly reflected in the answers to the question "If you had to choose, which law enforcement agency would you prefer to serve in?". Figure 1 shows that the majority of interviewees choose such law enforcement structures as the penal system, the Federal Penitentiary Service (30% of the respondents), the Ministry of Internal Affairs, internal affairs department (24%), and the Federal Security Service (20%).

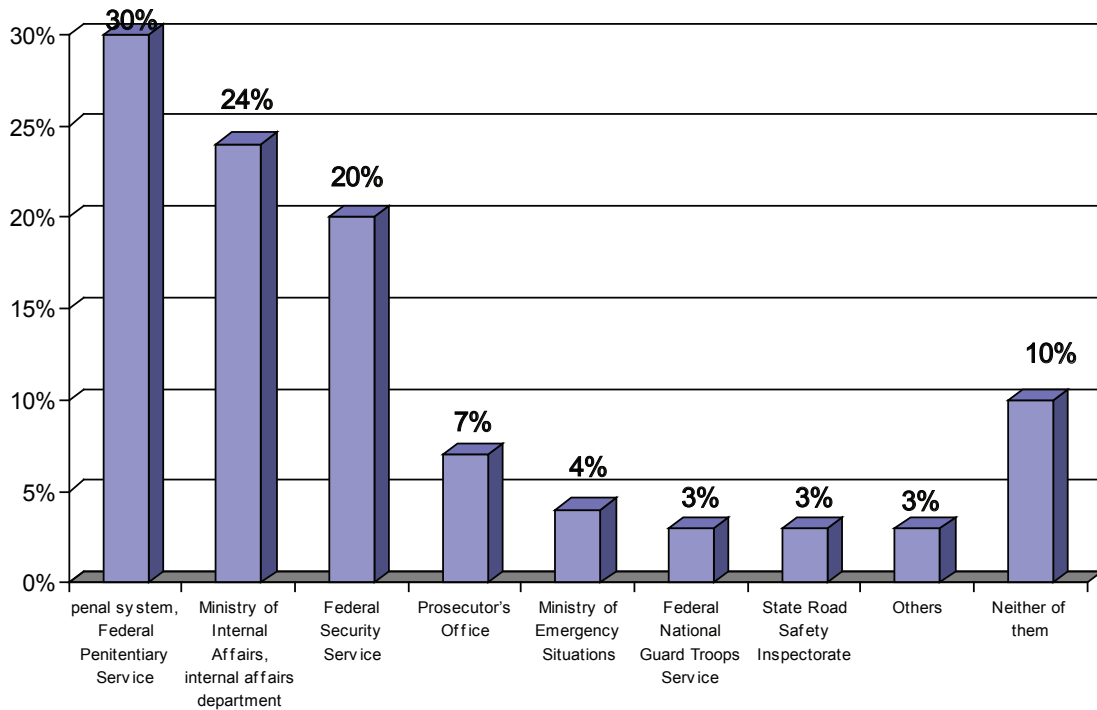


Figure 1. Distribution of respondents' opinions about the priority place of service in law enforcement agencies, % (answers to the question "If you had to choose, which law enforcement agency would you prefer to serve in?")

In general, the data indicate that the majority of respondents single out prestige of the profession, stability of the place of work and social packages.

One of the normatively enshrined guarantees of employment is the institution of personal surety, the purpose of which is the functional impact on the subjects of legal relations of a stimulating nature through the implementation of a wide range of personnel technologies, including those aimed at strengthening official discipline, legality, prevention of offenses; reducing staff turnover; eliminating corruption risks; stimulating the behavior of a candidate for service, corresponding to the prescriptions of service in the penal system.

Results of the study of employees' perceptions of organizational aspects of the service and directions for improving (optimizing the functioning) of the penal system. Figure 2 shows results of the study of respondents' opinions about the surety institution in the penal system. They show that this institution does not realize its potential in full and requires improvement of its organization.

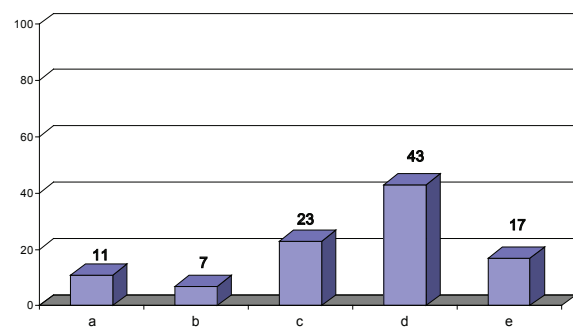


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents' opinions about the surety institution in the penal system, %
 Note: a) the surety procedure is necessary; b) the surety institution creates additional difficulties in employment; c) the surety institution guarantees quality selection of employees for service; d) I have not heard anything about it; e) the surety institution is a mere formality.

It turns out that 43% of the employees have not heard of such a procedure, and 17% of the respondents consider it an "empty formality". At the same time, according to 23% of the respondents, the surety institution is a guarantee of quality selection of employees for service, 11% of the respondents recognize that this procedure is necessary because they have gone through it, and 7% of the respondents note that

surety creates additional difficulties in employment, as there are difficulties in finding someone to stand surety.

Personnel turnover is a complex social phenomenon that depends on many circumstances of both subjective and objective nature. The complexity of the phenomenon of turnover predetermines the need to consider psychological aspects of the mechanism of its formation. It takes time to make a decision to dismiss. The decision to change the place of work is made in most cases in the presence of dissatisfaction with their situation, which arises from the discrepancy between the actually achieved working conditions and those conditions to which the employee seeks and considers really achievable. In case of elimination of this discrepancy, he/she may change his/her intentions and stay at the previous place of work.

The study of potential turnover can be based on a comparative analysis of two groups of employees – those who are satisfied with their position and who are dissatisfied. There are different stages of dissatisfaction (persons who are dissatisfied, but not willing to change the place of work; who are willing to change the place of work within the system; who have decided to leave). For a more in-depth study of potential turnover and development of practical measures to reduce its volume on the basis of the study, we believe it is necessary to identify attributes and characteristics that significantly affect the formation of the decision to change the place of work (age, length of service, education, marital status, income per family member); to determine key motives for changing the place of work and leaving the service, as well as the level of claims underlying the decision.

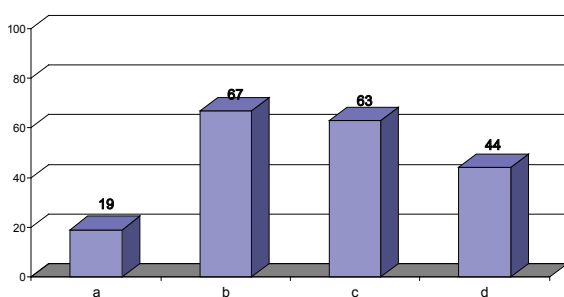


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents' opinions about causes of the staff turnover in the penal system, %
Note: a) unsatisfactory work of personnel department staff in personnel selection; b) low monetary allowance; c) heavy workload of an employee; d) irregular working hours.

Figure 3 shows results of the study of respondents' judgments about the causes of staff turnover in the penitentiary system. Most respondents speaking about the problem of staff turnover underline a low level of monetary allowance and heavy workload (67% and 63%, respectively), as well as irregular working hours and unsatisfactory work of personnel department staff (44% and 19%, respectively).

Answering the question "What circumstances can contribute to reducing the number of violations of official discipline by employees?", the respondents assume that the problem can be leveled by:

- increasing salaries (61% of the respondents);
- improving the quality of staffing for vacant positions (43%);
- increasing the prestige of service in the penal system (41%);
- reducing the workload of an employee (34%) (Figure 4).

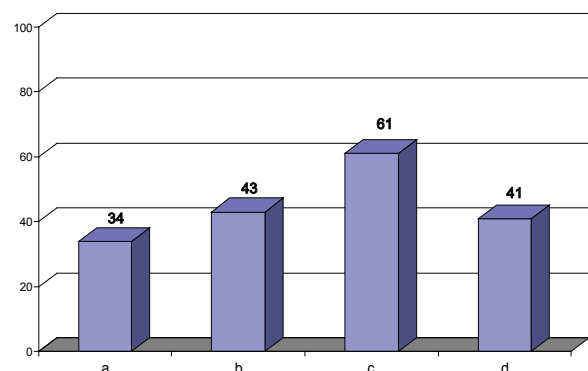


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents' opinions on the circumstances contributing to a reduction in the number of service discipline violations, %

Note: a) reducing the workload of the employee; b) improving the quality of staffing for vacant positions; c) increasing salaries; d) increasing the prestige of service in the penal system.

As for the possibility of receiving additional education in the penitentiary system, 80% of the respondents positively assess this opportunity, while 20% of them are indifferent.

The value of respondents' opinions about organizational problems of the penal system is undoubted; however, the respondents themselves note "unfortunately, during the performance of official duties and in general during the service any initiatives are unacceptable and not welcome at all".

Results of the survey of personal and professional qualities of employees.

The questionnaire has a number of questions regarding employees' perceptions of their professional and personal characteristics.

First of all, attention is paid to the respondents' assessment of their legal training

(knowledge of the current legislation) in the field of execution of criminal punishments. The results are presented as follows. The level of legal knowledge is assessed as high by 20% of the respondents, average – by 63%, and low – by 9%, while 9% of the surveyed find it difficult to answer.

Rank values of respondents' assessment of professional and personal qualities

Table 1

Professional and personal qualities	Rank (in descending order)	Average value
Stress resistance	1	6.2
Ability to react quickly to the situation	1	6.2
Patience	2	3.7
Ability to finish what has been started	3	2.7
Perseverance	3	2.7
Personal responsibility	4	2.4
Ability to adapt to situations	5	2.1
Mobility	6	1.7
Ability to concentrate and persevere	7	0.3

Thus, from the respondents' point of view, professional performance of an employee largely depends on the ability to cope with stressful situations, timely and promptly respond to emerging difficulties and changing conditions, on the possession of endurance and increased stamina.

Table 2 presents the results of ranking of respondents' life goals. Among the priority individual life goals, the employees noted living well, raising children, and creating a family. Actualization of corresponding needs shows that respondents are oriented to harmonization of all spheres of their life (family, children, work).

Rank values of self-assessment of life goals by respondents

Table 2

Life goals	Rank (in descending order)	Mean gain
To live well	1	7.2
To raise a child	2	4.8
Start a family	3	2.7
To find an interesting job	4	1.7
To unlock one's personal potential	5	0.6
To make a lot of money	5	0.6
To go abroad	6	0.3
Difficult to answer	6	0.3

It is also noteworthy that according to the survey results, 70% of the respondents have a positive attitude to religion, 3% have a negative attitude to it, 18% are indifferent, and 9% of them find it difficult to answer.

According to the data of the conducted research, the average personal-professional profile of a penal system employee looks as follows: an average level of legal training, intellectual abilities corresponding to the position held, ac-

tive life position, stress resistance, ability to react quickly to the situation, patience, desire to live in prosperity, raise children, create a family, and a positive attitude to religion.

Conclusion

First, when solving problems of the modern Russian penitentiary system, one should focus on staffing institutions and bodies of the penitentiary system: selection of candidates for service, selection and placement of person-

nel, adaptation, prevention of staff turnover. We consider a basic educational level of the candidate, such as knowledge, skills, abilities, skills, profile and departmental affiliation of educational institutions, demographic level, personal, business qualities, subjective attitudes, life priorities as preventive factors of staff turnover. At the stage of personnel selection in order to reduce economic costs by conducting test surveys and tests, it is important to find out whether the applicant has a real understanding of the specifics of the penal system and current realities.

Second, it is crucial to assess “potential staff turnover”, which differs significantly from the real one in that dissatisfaction with one's position and the desire to change the place of work requires solving the problems of identifying and

determining the signs that influence the adoption of such a decision. These are guaranteed confidence in the future, prestige of service in the penal system, social approval, competitive level of monetary payments and social guarantees.

Third, it is important to pay attention to the motivation of penal system employees, their ability to fulfill their mission to rehabilitate and adapt offenders to life at large, the formation of law-abiding attitudes to the choice and construction of their own way of life approved in society, their aspiration to restore social functions and integration into society.

In general, the results of this study may be useful in assessing the experience of implementing programs of personnel selection of candidates for service in the penal system.

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