



Personal Characteristics of Convicted Men with Demonstrative Blackmail Behavior

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Abstract

Introduction: the article analyzes results of the study of personal convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior and proposes recommendations for working with this category. *Purpose:* based on the data, to describe characteristics of convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior and formulate on their basis key directions of correction activities. *Methods:* analysis of literary sources, diagnostic (survey), methods of mathematical data processing. *Results:* convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior, in comparison with convicts who are not on preventive registration, have a more pronounced negative orientation, are capable of deception, prone to violating established rules, capable of aggression both against themselves and the environment, more prone to manipulating other people. Having a reduced ability to self-regulation and self-control, convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior are prone to impulsive actions in stressful situations, thoughtless actions. *Conclusion:* the identified personal characteristics of convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior should be taken into account both when organizing psychological work with them and when organizing interaction with all employees of the institution.

Keywords: demonstrative blackmail behavior; convicted men; personality traits; demonstrative suicide.

5.3.9. Legal psychology and accident psychology.

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Nowadays, due to the spread of humanistic ideas, including in the field of execution of punishment, control over activities of correctional institutions is increasing, both on the part of the prosecutor's office and public organizations. More and more attention is paid to the development of psychological service of penitentiary institutions and the role of educational and social work. In this regard, besides positive trends, there are provocative actions on the part of convicts characterized by demonstra-

tive blackmail behavior, which may lead to accidents and disruption of the work of correctional institutions.

Such demonstrative attempts are widely discussed and negatively affect the image of the entire penal system [1; 2]. At the same time, autoaggressive actions of convicts are rather widespread: according to the studies of A.M. Sysoev, the share of suicides amounted to 19% of the contingent [3]; according to 2013–2022 official statistics, despite some

fluctuations, the average suicide rate per thousand suspected, accused and convicted tends to decrease, but remains approximately 0.56 [4]. The number of convicts in correctional institutions is going down; with the exception of some years (a 20.4% increase in 2020) [5, p. 148], in the last two years their decrease (the number of committed suicides in 2021 – 252, in 2022 – 257). Foreign authors state even higher rates – 37% of convicts with suicidal behavior [6], 25% of convicts with suicidal attempts [7], the suicide risk coefficient of young convicted men exceeds the similar coefficient of men of this age with schizophrenia [8], the number of suicides of convicts is 10 times higher than suicidality in the general population [9]. Thus, the problem of autoaggressive behavior of convicts with its extreme manifestation in the form of suicide is one of the urgent problems of medical and psychological services of the penitentiary system [10], which is in crisis all over the world [11].

Autogressive behavior can be triggered by different processes, such as development of conflict with other convicts and harassment from detractors (including due to debt non-payment), reaction to the fact of arrest and placement in a pre-trial detention center, fear of a long sentence, and a lack of life prospects. It can also be caused by actions of correctional officers, such as improper searches, improper use of special equipment by staff, rough treatment of convicts by employees of the regime department [12–14].

Researchers determine personal manifestations of suicidal convicts, such as hyperactivity and attention deficit disorder, impulsive and demonstrative personality accentuations, a high level of aggression and irritability [15], increased risk of suicidal behavior when psychasthenia is combined with schizoidism [16], impulsivity, affectivity, demonstrativeness, temporary disorganization [17], and dependence on psychoactive substances [18].

At the same time, the most common autoaggressive actions of convicts are variants of demonstrative blackmail behavior [1; 19]. They can be autoaggressive actions (cutting, demonstrative use of harmful substances, etc.)

and inaction (refusal to eat, take medicine, follow orders, etc.). It is reasonable to consider these problems for further description of personal characteristics of convicts, characterized by demonstrative blackmail behavior.

Demonstrative blackmail autoaggressive actions are deliberate actions aimed at obtaining any benefits from demonstrating intentions to take one's own life. Their character is suicidal-like, not actually suicidal, since self-deprivation of life is not their main goal. Demonstrative blackmail suicidal actions, in case of insufficient consideration of the real danger of their commission, can lead to death, which in this case can be qualified as an accident [20, p. 31].

The purpose of such attempts is usually to exert psychological pressure on others aimed at changing conflict situations in order for the suicidal person to obtain the necessary results (to cause a feeling of pity, sympathy, get rid of threatening troubles, etc.) [21, p. 24]. The goal may also be to punish the offender in order to pay attention to him and cause him serious trouble. When demonstrating demonstrative blackmail behavior, convicts have an understanding that the purpose of their actions is not to kill themselves, therefore, all precautions are usually taken. Most actions take place in the presence of others. One of the indicators of the demonstrative blackmail nature of behavior is the way it is implemented, where the application of multiple and superficial cuts becomes predominant [22, p. 23]. In addition, a sign of demonstrative blackmail attempts may be the predominance of single and simple injuries [23, p. 25] At the same time, the study of A.V. Didenko and his co-authors shows the predominantly demonstrative nature of suicidal behavior of convicts who do not have personal pathologies, unlike convicts who have abnormal personality traits [24].

Thus, it can be concluded that convicts who attempt suicide do not always pursue the goal of killing themselves. Most often, this happens to attract attention or to obtain a certain benefit. These can be both spontaneous and deliberate actions, in most cases not fatal. But it often happens that convicts do not calculate their strength, or do not take into account all the

details of the attempted suicidal actions, which leads to tragedy. With the help of demonstrative actions, persons serving sentences try to maintain their status and their importance in front of convicts and the administration of the correctional institution. Manipulations can manifest themselves in psychological pressure on others, self-cutting, demonstrative refusal to take food and necessary medicines, etc.

To analyze personal characteristics of convicted men with demonstrative blackmail behavior, E.S. Novoselova conducted a study, which we supervised, at the Correctional Facility No. 3 of the Directorate of the FPS of Russia in the Samara Oblast. The survey included 60 convicted men serving their sentences in strict regime for the first time. An experimental group (30 people who are on preventive registration as suicidal and self-harming) and a control group (30 convicts who are not on preventive registration) were formed. The experimental group included those convicts who, according to the specialists working with them, demonstrated autoaggressive behavior, but not tried to kill themselves. The following methods were

used in the study: A.G. Shmelev's Suicide Risk Questionnaire (OSR) (as modified by T.N. Razuvaeva), "Comprehensive Study of the Convict's Personality" (KILO) by E.A. Chebalova. The Mann-Whitney U-test was used for mathematical data processing (to identify statistically significant differences between the two groups of subjects).

In order to identify features of the autoaggressive behavior of convicted men, including to confirm the predominance of demonstrative blackmail behavior, rather than true suicide, the OSR method was used in the experimental group.

When comparing two groups of convicts, it can be concluded that convicts in the control group are less susceptible to the desire to harm their lives and health, which can lead to death. Convicts of the experimental group more often use suicidal actions, but at the same time take precautions, thinking through everything to the smallest detail.

The results of the significance of differences in the Mann-Whitney U-test are presented in Table 1.

Comparison of the values of control and experimental groups according to the Suicide Risk Questionnaire (OSR)

Table 1

Scales	Average values		Significance of differences in the Mann-Whitney U-test
	Experimental group	Control group	
Demonstrativeness	4.5	4.7	–
Affectivity	4.9	4.3	≤ 0.01
Uniqueness	4.5	4.2	–
Insolvency	4.5	4	$p \leq 0.01$
Social pessimism	5	4.6	–
Breaking down cultural barriers	4.3	4.9	$p \leq 0.05$
Maximalism	5.6	4.2	$p \leq 0.01$
Time perspective	4.3	3.4	$p \leq 0.05$
Antisuicidal factor	5	4.2	$p \leq 0.05$
Suicidal risk	4.3	4	–

Based on the results, it can be concluded that convicts of both groups have significant differences on the scale "Affectivity" ($p \leq 0.01$), which suggests that convicts of the experimental group are more susceptible to the dominance of emotions over intellectual control in assessing the situation, that is, they are able to respond to a traumatic situation emotionally. Differences on the scale "Insolvency" ($p \leq 0.01$) indicate that convicts who are on preventive registration as suicidal have a negative concept of their own personality more often than convicts in the control group, which may interfere with their self-affirmation and self-realization in socially acceptable ways.

According to the scale "Breaking down cultural barriers" ($p \leq 0.05$), the revealed differences suggest that suicide is attractive for convicts, they do not exclude the possibility of suicide, that is why they are on preventive registration. High indicators on the scale "Maximalism" ($p \leq 0.01$) among those on preventive registra-

tion show the importance and hyperbolization of their value attitudes more than among convicts of the control group. Hyperbolization can lead to an inadequate assessment of life situations, their excessive dramatization, which is demonstrated to others, including through suicide attempts. The results on the scale "Time perspective" ($p \leq 0.05$) suggest that convicts of the control group are able to constructively plan their future, have prospects for further life after release, which is significantly weaker among convicts of the experimental group. There were also differences on the scale "Antisuicidal factor" ($p \leq 0.05$), which indicates that convicts of the control group have a deep understanding of responsibility for their lives, a sense of duty, which cannot be said about respondents with suicide attempts.

For a more in-depth analysis of personal characteristics of convicts of the experimental and control groups, the KILO method was used (Table 2).

Table 2

Comparison of the values of experimental and control groups according to the questionnaire "Comprehensive Study of the Convict's Personality (KILO)"

Scales	Average values		Significance of differences in the Mann-Whitney U-test
	Experimental group	Control group	
<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
Anxiety	4	3.5	-
Alienation	4.8	3.6	$p \leq 0.01$
Rigidity	4.8	3.9	-
Impulsivity	5	4	$p \leq 0.01$
Vulnerability in interpersonal contacts	4.7	3.4	$p \leq 0.01$
Self-obsession	6.3	6.8	-
Temptation to reject norms and rules	5.2	4.2	$p \leq 0.01$
Temptation to lie	5.2	5	$p \leq 0.01$
Temptation to aggression	4.9	4	$p \leq 0.05$
Autoaggression	5.2	3.5	$p \leq 0.01$
Hedonistic attitudes	4.4	2.8	$p \leq 0.01$
Risk appetite	4.5	4	-

1	2	3	4
Machiavellianism	5.4	4.3	$p \leq 0.01$
Adoption of a criminal subculture	5.2	5	–

According to the scale “Alienation”, the differences between convicts of the experimental and control groups are strongly pronounced ($p \leq 0.01$). High rates of alienation among respondents who are on preventive registration indicate that they have not sufficiently assimilated social norms, hardly accept responsibility for their actions, and they do not have a developed sense of guilt. Such characteristics can provoke both criminal behavior itself and demonstrative behavior focused on obtaining benefits in the present without taking into account the environment, society and their future prospects.

Differences on the scale “Impulsivity” ($p \leq 0.01$) suggest that convicts of the experimental group have weaker volitional control of emotional reactions, that is, they are capable of rash actions under the influence of the moment. They are more excitable and have a high risk appetite.

Convicts of the experimental group are more sensitive to criticism from others, they may have problems establishing emotional relationships, which they may solve with the help of demonstrative blackmail behavior. This is evidenced by the data on the scale “Vulnerability in interpersonal contacts” ($p \leq 0.01$).

According to the scale “Temptation to reject norms and rules”, differences were found at $p < 0.01$. Such data suggest that convicts of the experimental group, who are on preventive registration, tend to reject generally accepted norms and values and violate them, which is manifested, among other things, in demonstrative blackmail suicide attempts.

Considering the differences on the scale “Temptation to lie” ($p \leq 0.01$), it can be concluded that convicts of the experimental group are more prone to deception, manipulation of people, which can also manifest itself in demonstrative suicidal attempts to solve their problems.

According to the results obtained on the scale “Temptation to aggression” ($p < 0.05$), it can be said that convicts of the control group

are significantly less likely to show aggression. The values on the scale “Autoaggression” ($p \leq 0.01$) suggest that respondents who are on preventive registration tend to show aggression not only towards the environment, but also towards themselves. This behavior can be considered as a suicidal tendency, including as demonstrative manifestation.

The differences between control and experimental groups on the scale “Hedonistic attitudes” ($p \leq 0.01$) allow us to speak about willingness of convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior to implement additive behavior, which determines the predisposition to change their mental state in various ways, orientation to pleasure, including using different methods to achieve it.

According to the results of comparing data on the scale “Machiavellianism” ($p \leq 0.01$), convicts of the experimental group have a greater predisposition to manipulating people in interpersonal relationships, including using aggressive methods of manipulation.

In general, the results of the study allow us to conclude that persons with demonstrative blackmail behavior have a more pronounced negative orientation in comparison with convicts of the control group, they are capable of deception, prone to violating established rules, to aggression directed both at themselves and the environment, and manipulation of other people.

The diagnosed low ability to self-regulation and self-control of convicts with demonstratively blackmailing behavior leads to the fact that they are often impulsive, especially in stressful situations.

Convicts with demonstratively blackmailing behavior are often characterized by momentary desires become predominant, which can provoke behavior associated with risks to life and weak assessment of possible negative consequences.

Another tendency of the studied group of convicts is personal isolation, which leads to their denial of help, although it is suicidal be-

havior that becomes a kind of cry for help. They are able to draw attention to their problems and negative experiences only in this way, while often justifying suicide, positioning it as the only possible and positive way out of the current situation.

The results of the study allow us to formulate key proposals for preventing demonstrative blackmail behavior of convicted men, which may include the following:

1. Comprehensive diagnostics of convicts to identify persons prone to self-destructive behavior, including separate identification of a group of convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior.

2. Individual work including analysis of the crisis situation, search for goals, study of problems through their reassessment and transformation, general emphasis on the normality of negative experiences associated with staying in places of deprivation of liberty, and search for ways to respond to them.

3. Work on finding the meaning of life, actualizing existential values, planning for short and long periods with a positive but realistic assessment of prospects. The focus is on the mood and emotional state of the convict, since most often convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior have unclear prospects for further life and a pessimistic attitude towards the future.

4. Since convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior are characterized by increased excitability, aggression, it is important for such persons to develop skills of psychoemotional self-regulation.

5. Carrying out work on the formation of adequate self-esteem and improving the status of the convict by attracting him to public life of the detachment and the correc-

tional facility with regard to his abilities and interests.

6. Fostering a sense of responsibility for oneself to one's family and community.

Thus, the results of the study allow us to specify the work with convicted men with demonstrative blackmail behavior, which should begin with the diagnostic stage, which allows us to separate this group from those with true suicide. Working with these individuals is primarily of an individual nature, since in a group they can continue to use a demonstrative type of behavior.

The process of individual correctional work should include an analysis of the critical situation in which convicts find themselves, work with their experiences, including those related to the specifics of the correctional institution regime.

Assisting in shaping the meaning of life, plans for the near future and training in long-term planning for convicts with demonstrative blackmail behavior, highlighted as a recommendation, is associated with the need to correct their pessimistic attitude towards the future and build prospects for it.

The emphasis on the problems with self-regulation of convicted men with demonstrative blackmail behavior determines the construction of psychological work in this direction, as well as taking into account these characteristics in daily contacts with convicts, explaining these features to all employees who interact directly with them.

Thus, when interacting with convicted men with demonstrative blackmail, one should consider their personal characteristics. It is psychologists who should organize such work, but all employees who are in direct contact with convicts should take into account these features.

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