

Internal Factors of Development of Psychological Readiness for Professional Activities in Cynologist Officers

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Abstract: The purpose of our research is to carry out empirical study and analysis of internal factors of the development of psychological readiness for professional activities in cynologist officers. The article gives empirical evidence of internal factors of psychological readiness for professional activities in cynologist officers. The motivational and purposive, active and operational, emotional and volitional, reflexive and controlling components of psychological readiness are outlined. Three internal factors of psychological readiness of cynologist officers for professional activities are identified and analysed with the help of factor analysis of empirical indicators: awareness of psychological readiness for professional activities, a responsible subjective position, the ability to act independently, and take decisions.

Keywords: Psychological readiness of cynologist officers for professional activities, motivational and purposive readiness, active and operational readiness, emotional and volitional readiness, reflexive and controlling readiness.

INTRODUCTION

Military personnel's readiness for working in extreme conditions has become even more important due to events happening in the world in the last years. Their ability to successfully withstand the influence of various stress factors while maintaining high-performance efficiency has become paramount of military training. Professional training of cynologist officers is an integral part of psychological support and is composed of a set of continuous measures to ensure the formation of psychological qualities of military personnel that enable readiness to perform service tasks under any circumstances.

The purpose of our research is to carry out empirical study and analysis of internal factors of the development of psychological readiness for professional activities in cynologist officers.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The psychological readiness of military personnel in modern conditions was studied by many researchers [1-4]. They view professional psychological readiness as a complex holistic formation of a human psyche,

which connects several closely interconnected psychological phenomena that have a complex dynamic structure, and are characterised by functional links between the components. "Psychological readiness for an activity starts from setting a goal based on demands and motives (or understanding the set or evolved problem). The motives of becoming a professional are understood to be the focus of personal efforts toward values of the profession acquired which incite a person to set a specific aim in the profession: 'environment and take steps to achieve it' [5, p. 23]. The psychological readiness for one or another type of activity presents a developed system of convictions, views, relations, reasons, will, and intellectual qualities, knowledge, skills, attitudes, aiming at a specific behaviour [6].

The formed readiness for a certain type of activity can be identified only if a subject develops, an emotionally positive attitude, an ability to adapt their behaviour to the requirements of the activity, the formation of professionally significant qualities, emotional stability, ability to self-control, purposefulness, etc. [3, 7].

The enormous responsibility is placed on the representatives of extreme types of professional activities that are accompanied by moral risks [8]. It is very important to consider personality stress indicators under extreme working conditions [9-11]. Among the

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main stressors of military servicemen are insufficient levels of psychological readiness for difficult conditions of military-professional activity and emotional stability [12-14]. Other researchers investigated the possibilities of forming effective coping strategies by military servicemen [15].

The five-factor model of psychological readiness for workers in extreme professions has the following components that describe personal-psychological readiness for working under extreme conditions: motivation for duty, professional competence, professional endurance, willpower, mutual assistance, and trust [16]. Also developed a method of psychological analysis of such readiness [17]. The researcher analysed various individual approaches to the definition of psychological readiness for activity and defined a structure of psychological readiness for making decisions in combat or close to combat conditions in border guard officers [18]. This structure includes motivational, cognitive-operational, personal, and reflexive elements.

Researchers in Ukraine have studied various aspects of cynologists training [19-21]. "Development and improvement of cynological support in the system of law enforcement agencies of Ukraine and the tasks faced by law enforcement officers in the fight against illegal migration, illicit drug trafficking, smuggling of weapons, explosives, ammunition, the use of inspectors-cynologists with service dogs, while carrying out operational, service and preventive missions, stipulate high requirements to their professional training in general and formation of readiness for cynological support of operational and service activities in particular" [20, p.153]. Researchers in Ukraine have studied various aspects of cynologist training, namely, some of them focus on the availability of elementary (basic) knowledge, skills, and abilities in biology, zoology, and special cynological concepts, like the ability to carry out service dog training [19].

However, psychological readiness development factors in this rather complex profession, which combines two different areas: military service and working with service dogs while executing highly responsible tasks, have not been properly reflected in modern psychological research.

RESEARCH RESULTS

We view psychological readiness for professional activities as a stable, integrative formation of a personality resulting from appropriate professional

training. This training covers a number of components that reflect the content and conditions of professional activity and is the basis for its successful execution.

Based on the reviewed sources on the structure of professional psychological readiness and analysis of a cynologist officer's activities, we distinguish the following components of professional psychological readiness in cynologist officers: motivational and purposive, active and operational, emotional and volitional, reflexive and controlling [21]. In our opinion, these are the exact components that most accurately outline the specifics of cynologist officers' professional activities.

The motivational and purposive component includes motives, goals, needs, values and involves an interest in professional activities. A specialist-cynologist understands the essence of the cynological service and the specifics of the work as a cynologist officer shows a steady interest in it, as well as the need for professional development and personal growth.

The active and operational component is characterised by the knowledge necessary to design and carry out professional tasks and activities in the shortest possible time: a combination of means and methods of breeding, feeding, and using dogs in the armed forces during peace and war times. A cynologist must be able to train service dogs for all possible scenarios, such as protection, search, salvation. A specialist should be able to correctly assess the actual situation, show initiative, and be flexible when carrying out professional tasks.

The emotional and volitional component of psychological readiness shows the emotional state, ability to handle stress, and volitional qualities that ensure the success and high performance of a given professional. These qualities include purposefulness (being guided by a particular purpose), self-control and endurance (preservation of self-control in any situation), persistence (long-term preservation of efforts in achieving the desired goal), decisiveness (making informed decisions in a timely manner), independence (relative independence from external influences).

The reflective and controlling component is manifested in the ability to consciously control the results of own activities and the level of own development, independently analyse own professional competence, evaluate the results of own activities, their efficiency, quality, and the causes of failures. This

component is the regulator of personal achievements as well as the stimulus for professional growth [21].

The empirical study was carried out with future cynologist officers at the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine, the National Police of Ukraine, the National Guard of Ukraine, the State Criminal Execution Service of Ukraine, and the State Fiscal Service of Ukraine during the advanced training courses. The total sample is 100 people. The map of empirical research was developed in order to thoroughly study the professional psychological readiness of cynologist officers (Table 1).

This integrated approach and selection of research methods allowed us to thoroughly investigate empirical indicators of the psychological readiness of cynologist officers to professional activities.

Research Results – Statistical Data and their Interpretation

After conducting an empirical study aimed at collecting and in-depth analysis of the empirical data, identifying connections between the indicators of psychological readiness, and determining the most significant factors of its development, factor analysis was conducted. The SPSS STATISTICS 21 software was used to calculate the descriptors according to our study's criteria, which resulted in a three-factor structure (Table 2). The identified factors allowed us the following interpretation (Figure 1).

The first factor, F1, which explains 25.837% of the total variance with the most loading, includes: active and operational readiness (0.841), emotional and volitional readiness (0.803), reflexive and controlling readiness (0.774), and motivational and purposive readiness (0.771).

The factor itself has a positive tone and unites all the components of psychological readiness; it reflects the level of self-awareness and self-analysis in future cynologists in the unity of all components. Therefore, it can be conventionally called "Awareness of psychological readiness for professional activities" (Figure 1).

The second factor – F2 – explains 16.972% of the total variance and is represented by such indicators as "responsibility" (0.729), "submission to stress" (-0.683), "professional orientation" (0.682) and "internal locus of control" (0.453) (Table 1). It is important to note that the "instability to stress" indicator is taken with a negative sign. This factor can be interpreted as "Responsible Subjective Position" (Figure 1) and includes such core parameters as internal motivation, meaningful desire to work in the chosen profession, responsibility in executing own professional tasks, the ability to withstand high-stress loads in extreme conditions, and independently and adequately analyse own mistakes and failures in performing complex tasks based on own resources. In our opinion, it is this factor that reflects the most significant personal core

Table 1: Map of Empirical Research of Psychological Readiness of Cynologist Officers to Professional Activities

| Components | Criteria | Indicators | Diagnostic methods |
|----------------------------|-----------------------------------|---|--|
| Motivational and purposive | Professional orientation | Perception of future professional perspectives focuses on the military profession, formation of professional goals, love for service dogs, desire to work with them. | A questionnaire on professional orientation by T. Dubovytska, survey "Psychological readiness of cynologist officers to professional activities." |
| Active and operational | Professional knowledge and skills | Knowledge about different ways to carry out professional activities, the ability to care for service dogs, to train and use them in peace and war times, the flexibility of thinking. | A questionnaire on rigidity-flexibility of thinking, survey "Psychological readiness of cynologist officers for professional activities." |
| Emotional and volitional | Stress resistance | Determination, responsibility, self-control and restraint, perseverance, initiative, independence | Method of studying: J. Rotter's locus of control, the scale of conscientiousness by V. Melnikov and L. Yampolsky; a method for determination of stress tolerance and the maladaptation risk in stress "Forecast", the survey "Psychological readiness of cynologist officers for professional activities." |
| Reflexive and controlling | Reflexiveness | Adequacy of self-assessment of readiness for professional activities, ability to analyse own professional actions, the need for self-improvement | The reflexivity method by A. Karpov, survey "Psychological readiness of cynologist officers for professional activities." |

Table 2: Factor Loading of Variables of Psychological Readiness

| Variables of psychological readiness | Factor loading | | |
|--------------------------------------|----------------|----------|----------|
| | Factor 1 | Factor 2 | Factor 3 |
| Active and operational | 0.841 | -0.104 | 0.030 |
| Emotional and volitional | 0.803 | 0.089 | 0.010 |
| Reflexive and controlling | 0.774 | 0.024 | -0.049 |
| Motivational and purposive | 0.771 | 0.038 | -0.080 |
| Responsibility | 0.084 | 0.729 | 0.013 |
| Submission to stress | 0.0110 | -0.683 | 0.040 |
| Professional orientation | 0.056 | 0.682 | -0.035 |
| Reflexivity | 0.112 | 0.042 | 0.844 |
| Rigidity of thinking | 0.000 | -0.149 | -0.763 |
| Internal locus of control | 0.052 | 0.435 | 0.566 |

characteristics that predetermine readiness for professional activities.

Correlational analysis, according to B. Pierson, enabled us to establish a high correlation between the indicator of "responsibility" and "professional orientation" ($r = 0.283$), "submission to stress" ($r = -0.308$) at the level of statistical significance $p \leq 0.01$ and at the level of statistical significance $p \leq 0.05$ between the indicator of "responsibility" and the indicator of "internal locus of control" ($r = 0.210$). Moreover, there is also a negative correlation between the indicators of "professional orientation" and "submission to stress" ($r = -0.245$) at the level of statistical significance $p \leq 0.01$.

The third factor, F3, with the share of contribution to the common variance of the sample at 16.273%, has the essential loading of indicators of "reflexivity" (0.844), "rigidity of thinking" (-0.763), and "internal locus of control" (0.566) (Table 2). In this factor, the indicators of "reflexivity" and "internal locus of control" are positive, and the "rigidity of thinking" is negative. This factor may be marked as "Ability to make independent actions and take decisions" (Figure 1).

The indicated factorial structure reflects the close correlation between the skills to consciously and adequately analyse own activities, determine the significant external and internal conditions for achieving a goal, and control and correct own behaviour.

The most significant correlation (at $p \leq 0.01$) was found between the "internal locus of control" and "reflexivity" indicators ($r = 0.323$) and "reflexivity" and "rigidity of thinking" indicators ($r = -0.456$). Thus, it can be concluded that the outlined qualities are closely

interrelated and determine the ability of an individual to choose well-balanced and, at the same time, flexible solutions considering all of the complex internal and external factors.

Therefore, the identified factors are "Awareness of psychological readiness for professional activities" (with the share of 25.837% in the total variance), "Responsible subjective position" (16.972% of the total variance), and "Ability to make independent actions and take decisions" (16.273% of the total variance), which in combination cover 59.082% of the total sample variance.

CONCLUSIONS

The process of factor analysis enabled us to combine indicators of psychological readiness of cynologist officers to professional activities into the three most informative factors, which essentially determine the development of psychological readiness for professional activities. The factor analysis allowed us to identify the three most significant internal factors, such as awareness of psychological readiness for professional activities, responsible subjective position, and the ability to take independent actions and make decisions. The factor of "Awareness of psychological readiness for professional activities" combines all components of psychological readiness. The factor of "Responsible subjective position" is represented by such indicators as "responsibility", "resistance to stress", "professional orientation," and "internal locus of control". The factor of "Ability to take independent actions and make decisions" has a significant load on indicators of "reflexivity", "flexibility of thinking", and "internal locus of control".

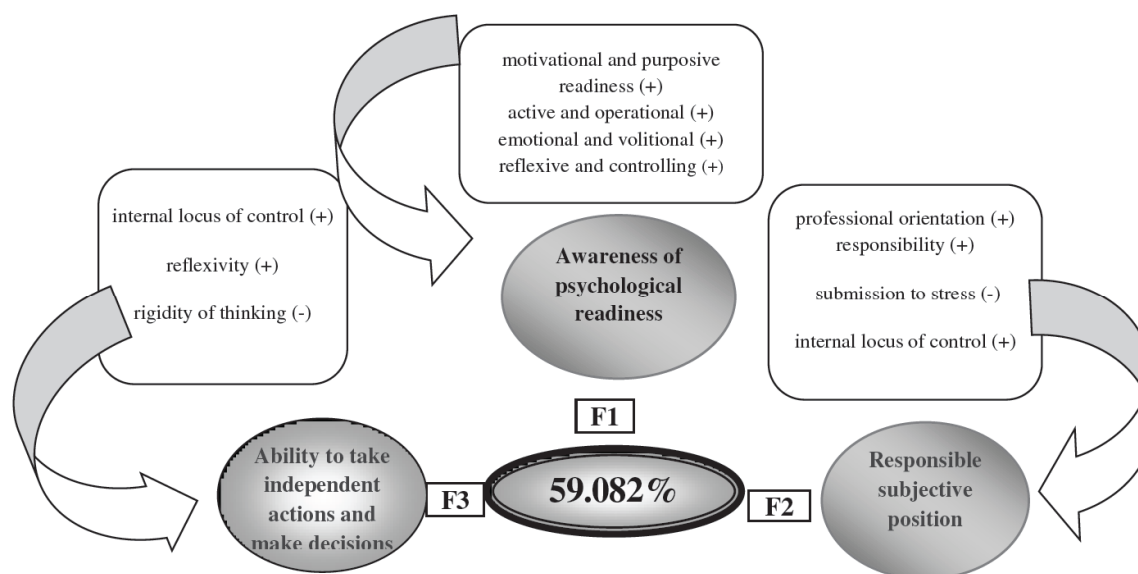


Figure 1: Factorial structure of empirical indicators of psychological readiness of cynologist officers to professional activities.

The factor analysis resulted in the definition of internal factors of the development of psychological readiness for professional activities in cynologist officers. Some of these factors have been proven to be the same as in the development of psychological readiness for professional activity in servicemen in general, while others have been identified as specific to the development of psychological readiness in cynologists, which had not been studied until now. In particular, it was confirmed that professional psychological readiness is a complex holistic formation of a human psyche that has a complex dynamic structure and is characterised by functional links between the components [1-4]. Our study also confirms the researcher's thoughts, who defined a structure of psychological readiness for making decisions in combat or close to combat conditions in border guard officers, including motivational, cognitive-operational, personal, and reflexive elements [18]. Together with researchers' findings, our study has also proven that it is very important to consider personality stress indicators under extreme working conditions [9-11].

At the same time, our study is the first one to reveal significant correlations between professionally significant qualities in the holistic structure of psychological readiness for professional activities of cynologist officers, such as internal locus of control, reflexivity, the flexibility of thinking and professional orientation, responsibility, stress resistance, internal locus of control. We were the first to identify the most significant internal factors in developing such readiness based on the factor analysis of empirical indicators, which emphasises the complexity of professional

activities of cynologist officers and their specificity in comparison to professionals of other extreme occupations. Particularly notable is the finding that awareness, understanding, and analysis of all readiness components by cynologist officers – motivational and purposive, active and operational, emotional and volitional, reflexive and controlling – serve as a crucial factor.

We see the prospects for further research in developing and testing a concept of psychological support to develop professional psychological readiness of cynologist officers while taking the isolated factors into account.

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