

STUDY OF SOCIO-PSYCHOLOGICAL FOUNDATIONS OF THE DESTRUCTIVE LABOR BEHAVIOR OF THE STAFF

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Abstract

The problem of toxicity of workplaces and toxic (destructive) behavior of personnel (A. Fedorova, M. Gatti) points out the necessity of a more detailed, social and psychological study of the causes of destructive behavior. Among the types of toxic (destructive) manifestations of the personnel there are stereotyped forms of thinking and behavior that negatively affect working life and professional interaction; open or covert aggressive behavior of employees (conflict); regular (systematic) violation of discipline; refusal to perform basic professional duties (sabotage at the workplace). Analysis of the causes of destructive behavior of the personnel results in the conclusion that they are related to the existing motives of professional activity and personal values.

The research undertaken by the authors of the paper involved the employees of the large enterprise functioning in the sphere of the rolled steel and located in Sverdlovsk region. The first group of participants consisted of 19 employees, who had been receiving verbal reprimand related to violation of labor discipline and quality of work on a regular basis within the last three years. The second group included 20 employees, whose work activities were characterized by effectiveness and high quality.

Keywords: destructive behavior, toxic personnel, optimal behavior, sense-life orientations of employees, motives of professional activity

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Introduction

The problem of studying the issue of personal contribution of each employee in the perspective of the overall result of the organization's activities remains to be of importance (Tokareva, Tokarev, 2016). Its solution is closely connected with the necessity to understand the

reason for deviation of the employee from the track of the team's common tasks; to establish external and internal conditions, which cause the destructive behavior of the employee. According to Fedorova & Gatti (2016), those employees, who consciously or unconsciously violate the norms and procedures of labor activity and thus cause any negative consequences, are classified as toxic. Destructive or violating behavior of the personnel is also referred to by these authors as negatively infecting others or toxic. All the above said makes it important to thoroughly study the basics of destructive behavior and the mechanism of formation of toxic jobs and toxic behavior of personnel (Tokareva, Tokarev 2017).

According to Kusy & Holloway (2009), destructive behavior is a behavior, which destroys the norms of social and labor relationship accepted by the organization and which has the negative influence on the perspectives of the company development. The main types of toxic (destructive) behavior demonstration of the personnel include stereotyped forms of thinking and behavior, which negatively affect work activity and professional interaction; open or covert aggressive behavior of employees (tendency to have conflicts); regular (systematic) violation of discipline; refusal to perform basic professional duties (sabotage at the workplace) (Babenko, 2000). A. Fedorova believes that this type of behavior belongs to the category of socially polluting. Social pollution originates from the use of destructive methods of human resource management, which makes economic sense not only for society, but also for the organizations creating toxic workplaces. When management is focused only on making profits and ignores physical and spiritual well-being of both employees of the organization and the society as a whole, it forms toxicity, both of the workplaces and the toxicity of the personnel behavior (Goldman, 2008). The concept of a toxic workplace (the term *toxicity* is used here in a broad sense: in relation to harmful working conditions and unfavorable socio-psychological aspects of the working environment) came into usage at the end of the last century (Macklem, 2005). The term 'unfavorable workplace' includes all dysfunctional factors of the professional environment, i.e. factors of the working environment and the labor process, the impact of which can cause a number of health problems for the worker (reduction of the level of adaptation of the organism; an increase of somatic and infectious diseases; temporary or persistent lack of efficiency; increase in occupational morbidity (Lysenko, 2016).

So far, external factors of the formation of destructive or toxic behavior of personnel include high level of absenteeism and staff turnover, low level of performing discipline and quality of work performed, a large number of complaints from clients, power struggles and other

forms of competition, dissatisfaction of workers with material and moral rewards, unwillingness of employees to perform any social functions in the team, deterioration of the socio-psychological climate, psychological terror in the working place (mobbing, bullying, bossing), destructive leadership (Fedorova, 2017).

As long as it remains hard to analyze the internal causes of destructive behavior, it is important to study the social and psychological basis of the employees' toxicity and to develop measures to prevent and to eliminate it (Tennstadt, 1987; Burke, 2010).

1 Materials and methods

The research undertaken by the authors of the paper involved 72 male employees of the large enterprise functioning in the sphere of the rolled steel and located in Sverdlovsk region. The experimental part of the research was organized in several stages. At the first one, the researchers analyzed the personal files of employees, the dynamics of staff turnover and held an interview with the head of the organization. It helped to select a group of 19 people, whose behavior was mainly characterized as destructive. These were the employees, who had regular remarks related to violation of labor discipline and quality of work over the past three years working at this enterprise.

From the point of view of the managers, these employees have no respect or recognition from the side of their coworkers. The average age of these employees is 41. No representative of this group was ever interested or engaged in professional skills improvement over the past three years. These employees tend to demonstrate such types of destructive forms of behavior as aggressive behavior, alcohol abuse, violation of official discipline. Various violations in the moral and psychological spheres of a person's personality, as well as the constant impact of stressful environmental factors, are known to result in the reduction of specific indicators of professional activity, and in the evasion of basic professional assignments performance in particular.

The second group consisted of 20 employees, whose activities were marked by high quality and productivity of work. The average age is 29 years. These employees regularly improve their qualifications and therefore represent a competent group, ready to learn and train.

At the second stage, the researchers carried out a psychological diagnosis of employees of both the groups, which was aimed at drawing up their social and psychological portraits and

establishing the internal causes of destructive behavior. The researchers used such research methods as:

The research methods included a survey, an expert interview, the analysis of professional effectiveness, the techniques ‘Motivation for Success’ and ‘Motivation to Avoid Failure’ offered by T. Ehlers, the technique ‘Motivation Profile’ by R. Richey and P. Martin, the technique ‘Subjective Locus of Control’ by J. Rotter. Student’s T-test was used for the purpose of statistical processing of the obtained data.

2 Results

Comparison of motivation indicators and socio-psychological orientation of these groups of employees shows that employees with signs of toxicity have a greater external motivation and a higher sensitive orientation (52.6%). This feature makes people insecure, less self-confident, as a result of which, they tend to demonstrate proneness to conflict and protective aggression. The leading motivations and focus of a group of successful specialists is the internal motivation and the normative type of social orientation, characterized by flexibility (65%). Differences in the life-meaning orientations are that the employees of the first group are focused on setting goals, but not on achieving results (29.60 in average), which leads to numerous plans and projects that are not implemented in life. For the second group, the most characteristic values are the ‘productivity of life’ (28.66 in average) and the ‘locus of life control’ (25,90 in average).

To assess the differences between the two samples, we used Student's t-criterion. As a result of mathematical processing of data, we found out significant differences between toxic and successful employees in terms of all the studied indicators. All values are at $p < 0.05000$ (Table 1).

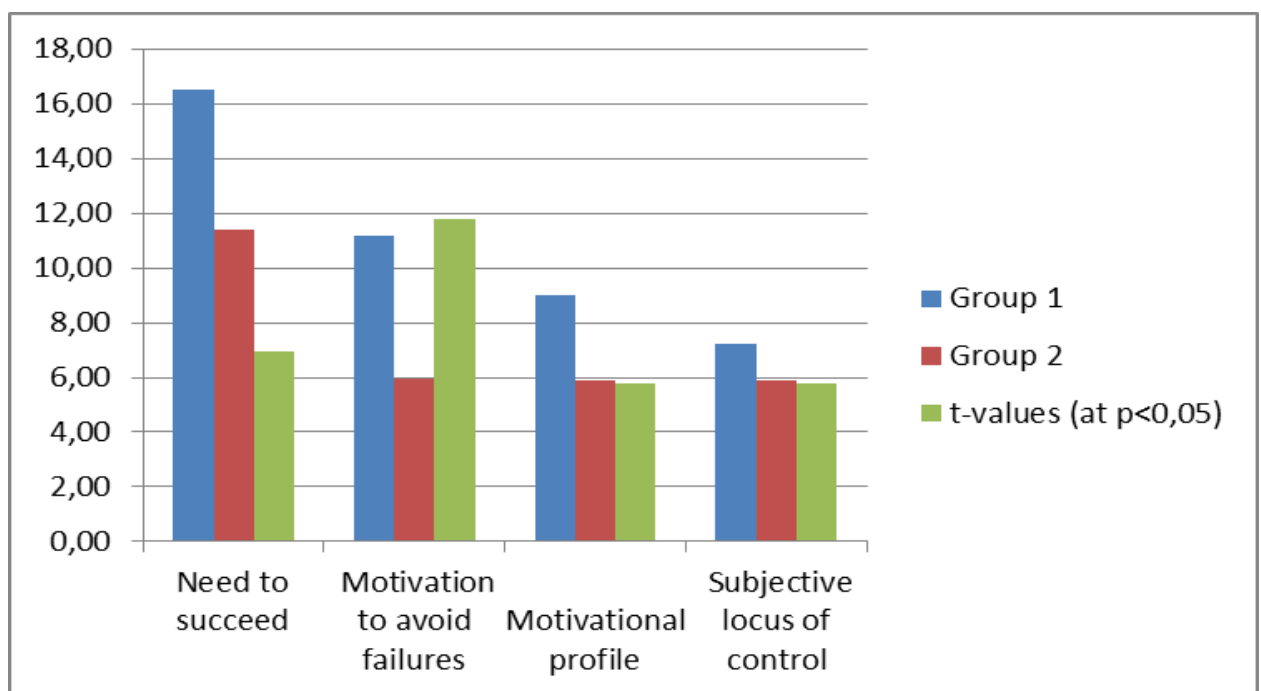
Table 1. Results of the Study of the Socio-Psychological Qualities of Employees

Methods	Group 1	Group 2	T
Need to Succeed	16.53	11.41	6.94
Motivation to Avoid Failures	11.15	5.93	11.76
Motivational Profile	8.98	5.91	5.80

Subjective Locus of Control	7.24	5.91	5.80
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Source: Student's T-test

Picture 1. Graphic Results of the Study of the Socio-Psychological Qualities of Employees



Having analyzed the obtained results, we can distinguish several social-psychological types of individuals. The first group includes passive-dependent individuals or employees with reduced activity, who are characterized by inertness in decision-making, conformance, insecurity, the desire to comply with instructions and guidelines (26.5%). It is not recommended to appoint these employees to positions, which require high responsibility, quick decision making and flexibility of behavior.

The second group includes impulsive and aggressive people who can be characterized by a constant, clearly expressed disdain of social norms and statutory requirements, as well as a low level of control over their behavior. They demonstrate aggressiveness, tendency to dysphoria,

weak control over alcohol consumption. In the prognostic way, they are characterized by poor adaptability to the conditions and requirements of professional activity (15.7%).

The third group represents rigidly-paranoid personalities, who are persistent in upholding their own opinion, straightforwardness, lack of psychological flexibility (47.3%).

The fourth group includes hypertemic individuals, who are at ease in decision-making, those who demonstrate overestimated self-esteem, inconstancy in affections, emotional immaturity. In extreme circumstances of activity, these employees are brave, resolute; they show excessive, but not always justified activity (10.5%).

All these identified psychological types of personality have low psycho-emotional and stress resistance, aggressiveness, inability to effectively resolve crisis situations, propensity to stereotyped behaviors and high risk of professional deformation.

Conclusion

Increase of confidence and shift from external to internal motivational orientation allow to neutralize negative influence and distribution of destructive effect of toxic employees (Group 2). It is recommended to organize individual and group events with a specialist of the Personnel Management Center, which will help to find the right orientation in life and motivational purposes. To prevent the destructive behavior of the personnel, the organization can apply the mechanism of mentoring optimal and effective employees, monitor the conditions of professional activity and consistent systematic steps to maintain the traditions that unite the team. To form self-control over aggressiveness and deterrence of aggressive acts, it is important to work at the development of psychological processes of empathy, identification and decentralization, which form the ability to understand other people and to sympathize them, and to contribute to the formation of the notion of another person as a unique value. The results of the study allow us to conclude that, with low or moderate provocation and arousal caused by anger, the fear of applying administrative punishment can prevent from manifestations of open aggression. On the contrary, when the provocation and the anger that arises in response to it are strong, the fear of punishment may not play any role and not have a deterrent effect. No doubt, many employees, being in a state of anger, are simply not able to think about the consequences of their actions. Therefore, they behave impulsively and attack others without thinking about the possible consequences of their actions. Administrative punishment will have a lasting effect only if it is carried out under certain conditions: aggressive action and punishment should be

separated by a short period of time; punishment must be strict enough and unpleasant; the employee must clearly understand that a certain form of his behavior entails punishment.

However, it is important to remember that the socio-psychological foundations of the destructive behavior of the staff are: (1) not matching what the worker does to the organization's goals and established requirements; (2) not doing the work in the most rational and economical ways (ways) and (3) not using the employee's capabilities (abilities, knowledge, skills, forces).

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