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CONFLICT AND STRESS MANAGEMENT AT CUSTOMS OFFICES

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Abstract

A model of human resources technology for conflict and stress management at customs offices, focused on a complex study of the causes of destructive conflicts and professional stresses and development of the administrative decision-making process for their prevention, is proposed. An urgent problem of developing the conflict competence of managers and staff as a strategic method for conflict and stress management in the process of public service in customs bodies is considered. An effective design of conflict counseling in customs bodies is provided. Theoretical background, development of methodological and practical recommendations on the establishment of a human resource technology for conflict and stress management, the formation of a conflict counseling system in the work of human resource management in customs authorities are proposed. A number of potential problems and risks associated with the introduction of conflict and stress management technology in the customs authorities are presented.

The authors suggest considering conflict counseling as a method of human resources risks minimization in customs bodies. The results of various sociological surveys, including anxiety level, conflict intensity and the coping strategies, conducted among students of Samara State Technical University (specialty Customs) are presented. Integrated information maps of professional stress for various categories of staff in customs authorities are developed.

1. Introduction

Providing high-quality service in the area of customs is a key issue in the Concept of Long-Term Social and Economic Development of Russia until 2020 in the context of transformation processes in customs bodies and rational use of resources. A strategic task for the development of customs management is the improvement of human resources technologies and methods of staff management at customs offices. Innovative processes that ensure the strategic development of organizations affect labour behaviour, motivation, job satisfaction, moral and psychological climate, the level of destructive conflicts and professional stress of the staff. Increasing the level of destructive conflicts in customs authorities can seriously damage the economic sovereignty and national security of Russia. All existing results of scientific research and practical experience create certain prerequisites for the development of new methods, techniques, models for managing the organizational conflicts and professional stresses in customs bodies. The origins of the studies of social confrontations in organizations are found in the fundamental works of scientists carrying out research on the causes and the structure of conflict interactions (Weber, 2012; Mills, 2001). Socio-psychological aspects of management and resolution of social and organizational conflicts are contained in the papers of sociologists, psychologists working on the structure and dynamics of conflict confrontations (Zigert & Lang, 1990; Lange & Cornelius, 1992; Freud, 2011; Scott, 1993). Russian scientists have studied some specific factors of modern social and labour conflicts in organizations and developed recommendations for the prevention of their destructive cases (Dmitriev, 2002; Sulimova, 2006; Zdravomyslov, 1996; Grishina, 2008; Prigozhin, 2010; Shalenko, 2008; Pugachev, 2011; Antsupov, 2011; Kibanov, 2009). The contribution to defining the concept "competence" was made by some scientists (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990; McClelland, 1998; Woodruffe, 1991; Spencer & Spencer, 1993; Burgoyne, 1989; Hartle, 1995; Beaumont, 1996). They examined the integral characteristics of this concept. In the papers of sociologists, the analysis of consulting support methods of management processes in conflict situations is presented (Prein, 1982; Mastenbroek, 1987).

Many current works are devoted to the problems of conflict and stress management in a modern organization, the conflict competence of the staff and the conflict counselling. The role of self-efficacy and collective effectiveness as moderators of professional stress of staff (among IT specialists) is analyzed (Anantharaman, Rajeswari, Angusamy, & Kuppusamy, 2017). The authors found that these moderators potentially mitigate the destructive effects of the professional stress regarding depletion of work and the organizational environment, excepting job satisfaction. Effective measures of stress management are analyzed and the technology for the improving the conflict competence including components of the conflict competence for officers is developed (Bulatbaeva, Luchinin, Khasanovich, Erlanovich, & Manarbekovich, 2015). They also analyze its impact on the effectiveness of administrative duties. The content and the mechanism of technology introduction are being developed to improve the conflict competence of military commanders. The strategic task of forming the conflict competence among university specialists in the education sector is updated (Sherniyazova, 2014). The urgent problem of increasing the level of conflict culture among the staff in the internal troops system is examined. A scoping review of individual, interpersonal and organisational factors of healthcare conflict was made in the healthcare sector (Kim, et al., 2017). Systematic research results of the medical staff professional activity concerning the problem of professional stress dynamics are examined (Jetha, Kernan, &

Kurowsk, 2017). The results allow the authors to make recommendations on effective interference in conflict situations among interorganizational groups and to specify the impact of interpersonal conflicts on creativity of groups in interorganizational groups.

Meyer Junior et al. (2017) have examined the relationships between managerial decisions, academic strategies and operating results at the university. The causes of conflicts of values and management problems in the educational organization are discussed in the paper. Brown et al. (2005) have studied the situations when labour behaviour is used to build and support the psychological climate. They also have examined the impact of these factors on organizational commitment, conflict and personal isolation. Costello et al. (2011) have studied the performance improvement issues and continuing education for staff aimed at the increase of the staff competency level. Many researchers consider the prevention of organizational conflicts as an effective social management technology in the activity of modern Russian organizations today. Some scientists develop scientific and practical principles of social tension management in the organization, and others are studying the trends for improving social mechanisms for managing organizational conflicts in manufacturing enterprises. A number of papers are devoted to theoretical and practical researches on labour standardization to lower the stress level of the staff.

The usefulness of conflict and stress management technology arises from essential properties of this approach such as: the unity of social and labour (group) and personal characteristics of the employee; personal efficiency; support for staff mobility; integration of the requirements of the labour economy, etc. The authors believe that certain prerequisites for the effective use of the conflict counselling system in staff management now exist in customs bodies due to the growing complexity of the functionality in modern organizations, strengthening the role of the strategic focus on personnel policy, the rising cost on various personnel programs, etc.

2. Problem Statement

The organizational and managerial function in the management activity of the head of customs bodies involves solution of organizational, managerial, socio-psychological and labour problems, which could take the form of destructive conflicts and cause a deterioration in the moral and psychological climate and an increase in the level of social tension in the team. The contradiction lies in the fact that there is a need to use the human resource technology for conflict and stress management in customs bodies. However, customs management does not have developed human resource technologies which are adequate to the level of professional competence of the head of the organization. One of the objective reasons is that many scientists and specialists in the field of staff management do not pay enough attention to a systematic and integrated approach to solving this problem in the field of staff policy. They do not address the need to organize a focused interaction of the management system, monitoring and participation of managing staff in conflict and stress management. In order to achieve the objectives of the customs authorities through the consistent overcoming of disagreements in the implementation of production goals which can be associated with both dysfunctional conflicts and constructive conflicts, the managers need to introduce and use human resource technology for conflict and stress management. The effectiveness of this technology depends on the level of the conflict competence of the head. These

factors determine the relevance of scientific research of conflict management, both in general and in specific structural forms, for example, in the offices of the customs authority.

3.   Research Questions

The scope of the present study is to analyze the principles and stages of conflict and stress management technology; to develop organizational and psychological-pedagogical recommendations on improvement of conflict competence of managers and staff at customs authorities; to test the method of personal training in the process of complex trainings; to develop methodical provision (teaching aids, conflict tasks, cases, etc.). All these factors are essential for the effective implementation of the conflict management system and the development of conflict competence of customs officers.

The need to create the technology of conflict and stress management, to raise the level of conflict competence of staff, to develop the conflict counselling system in staff management is justified in this work by the survey. The survey list includes the views of managers and specialists of the personnel departments of customs bodies and students (specialty Customs). The analysis of the need for the conflict counselling system in customs authorities was also taken into account.

4.   Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study is the theoretical background, development of methodological and practical recommendations on the establishment of a human resource technology for conflict and stress management, the formation of a conflict counselling system in the work of human resource management in customs authorities.

The aim of the research (2014-2016) was to identify the level of professional stress of the staff. One of the tasks was to develop integrated information maps of professional stress for various categories of staff in customs authorities. The psychological stress scale – PSM-25 (Lemyre, 1991) was used. In 2015 the stress monitoring was conducted among the staff of one of the customs authorities focused on stress factors of the organization environment. In the research (2014-2017), the diagnostics of the anxiety level, conflict intensity and the coping strategies of future specialists of the customs service of the Russian Federation (a method by Spielberger & Khanin, 2009) was carried out. An analysis of the peculiarities of students' behavior strategies (specialty *Customs*) in stressful situations (questionnaire *Coping strategies* by R. Lazarus, 2009) was conducted.

5.   Research Methods

5.1.   Specification of the model of conflict and stress management technology in the organization
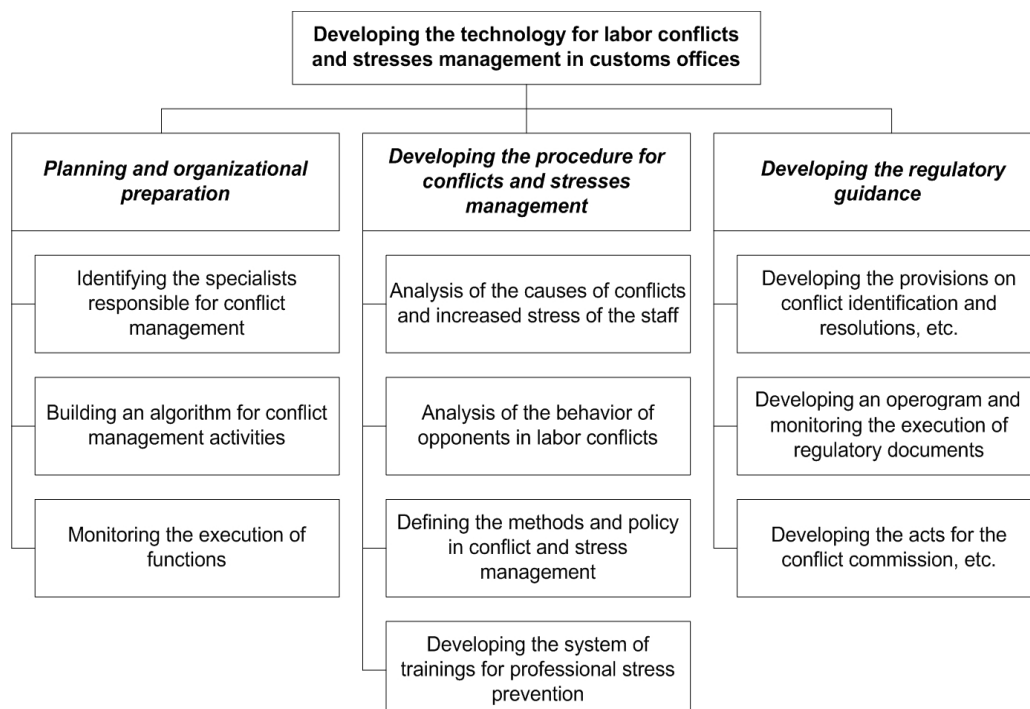
The management of organizational conflicts and professional stress in customs authorities is a system of principles, methods providing timely prediction of causes of the increased level of destructive conflicts in the labour collective. This system also includes prevention programs aimed at forming a highly-integrated staff of the organization. This staff strategy includes social and labour relations that appear in the course of the work activity and the system of Staff Regulations and Rules. Conflict and

stress management refers to the activities of the administrative staff at all levels of the customs service. The system of conflict and stress management in customs bodies is a complex structure of elements (an object, subjects), mechanism, functions, methods, resources and technologies.

The subject of the technology includes subjects of staff management: top management, middle management (customs authorities), primary groups and the staff of customs offices. The object of management includes all officials. Conflict and stress management resources are all staff management resources that ensure the effectiveness of the management impact on staff. Conflict and stress management involves the formation of a socio-economic mechanism which is a complex of social regulation of labour behaviour of the staff. This mechanism includes principles, technologies, methods, procedures, a monitoring system of the implementation of agreements and tools for management of professional work of staff. The socio-economic mechanism of conflict and stress management in customs bodies can be represented by socio-economic, business and legal elements. The socio-economic element includes methods and tools for regulating labour relations between employers, employees and the state. The business element presupposes the identification of methods and technologies for resolving and institutionalizing of the conflict.

The legal element is the formation of the legal and documentary support of the conflict and stress management system. The authors believe that the general scheme of technology of conflict and stress management consists of a sequence of the following steps.

The first stage is targeted at defining the economic and social goals and forming a technology for conflict and stress management. At *the second stage,* it is necessary to create methods for predicting the needs of the staff in conflict counselling, to generate the programs of conflict and stress prevention, to formulate principles and strategic directions of conflict activity and to define the aims, goals and programs for the development and implementation of this technology.

Figure 01. Sample scheme of the technology for conflict and stress management in customs authorities
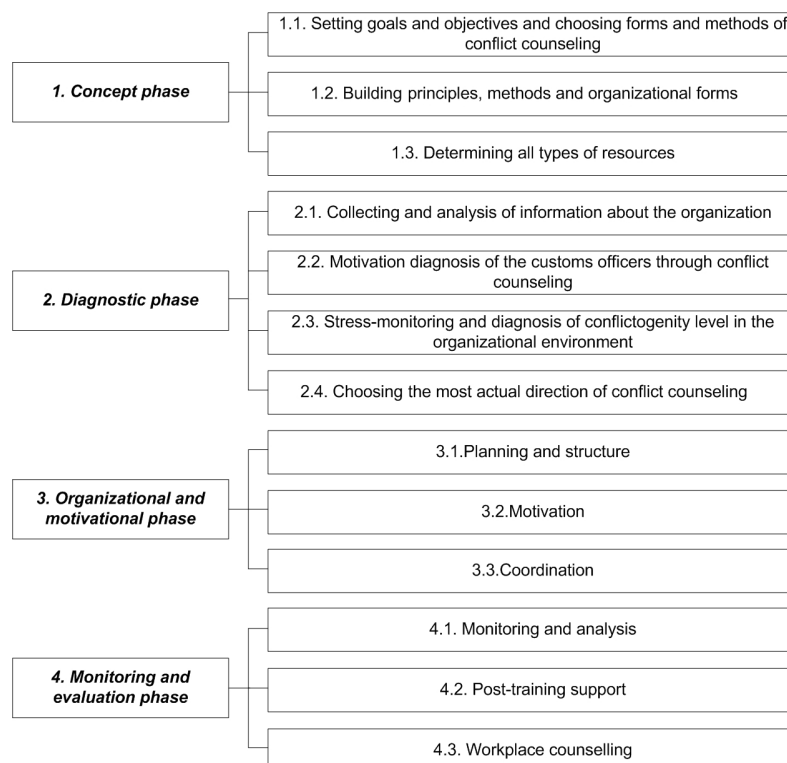
The third stage involves the introduction of conflict management technology in the managerial practices of the organization, as well as the analysis of existing forms of conflict and stress management. At *the fourth stage* it is necessary to analyze the internal and external resources of the technology, to carry out the diagnostics of the professional stress level, conflict level, etc. At *the fifth stage* it is necessary to classify the motives of the staff attitude towards the activities of this technology and to develop the ways of motivating the staff for anti-conflict behavior.

The sixth stage requires the analysis of the results, the identification of conflict capacities and the designing of forms and socio-psychological methods of conflict and stress management. At *the seventh stage,* it is necessary to analyze the existing problems, to monitor the effectiveness of the introduction of conflict and stress management technology in management practice, to assess the socio-economic effectiveness of conflict and stress management technology (Figure 01).

5.2. Conflict counselling as a method of improving the social interaction of individuals in the labour process

The effective introduction of conflict and stress management technology in management practice is possible on the basis of a conflict system for the staff. Conflict counselling is a method of improving the social interaction of individuals in the labour process and the main way to resolve organizational (administrative, psychological, social and labour) conflicts in the organization (Zernyshko, 2005)

The use of conflict counselling was based on the need for meeting the challenges in the management of customs staff. The purpose for the developing of the system of conflict counselling which is included in the system of professional development of the staff is to justify the complex managerial and educational tools for the formation of conflict competence of managers and the staff of customs authorities. A sample scheme for implementing the conflict management system in the customs authorities is presented in Figure 02.

1. Concept phase
- 1.1. Setting goals and objectives and choosing forms and methods of conflict counseling
- 1.2. Building principles, methods and organizational forms
- 1.3. Determining all types of resources

2. Diagnostic phase
- 2.1. Collecting and analysis of information about the organization
- 2.2. Motivation diagnosis of the customs officers through conflict counseling
- 2.3. Stress-monitoring and diagnosis of conflictogenity level in the organizational environment
- 2.4. Choosing the most actual direction of conflict counseling

3. Organizational and motivational phase
- 3.1. Planning and structure
- 3.2. Motivation
- 3.3. Coordination

4. Monitoring and evaluation phase
- 4.1. Monitoring and analysis
- 4.2. Post-training support
- 4.3. Workplace counselling

Figure 02. Framework of the design and implementation of the conflict counselling system in customs offices

Implementation of the counselling system is aimed to promote a conflict culture; to increase personal, professional and conflict competence, the communicative literacy of the staff of customs bodies and to create competencies in the following areas:

- principles, methods of conflict and stress management;
- regulatory and methodological frameworks of public administration conflict management in customs bodies;
- typologies: organizational and social conflicts, institutional public administration conflicts;
- interpersonal state administrative conflicts that arise in the process of customs procedures;
- methods: predicting the conflict potential of managers, identifying the trends of destructive conflict situations in customs bodies, identifying possible strategies for staff behaviour in various conflict situations, diagnosis of coping strategies in stressful situations;
- documentation support of the technology of conflict and stress management.

5.3. Training methods in the system of conflict counselling

Creating the conflict competence of managers and the staff in customs bodies should be carried out within the Staff Development System. The university discipline *Conflict management* (specialty *Customs*) cannot be used for conflict management training of managers and staff of customs bodies due to the age, social, individual and personal characteristics of specialists. On the basis of earlier studies, the authors believe that the training course for customs officials should include the following groups of methods (See Figure 03).
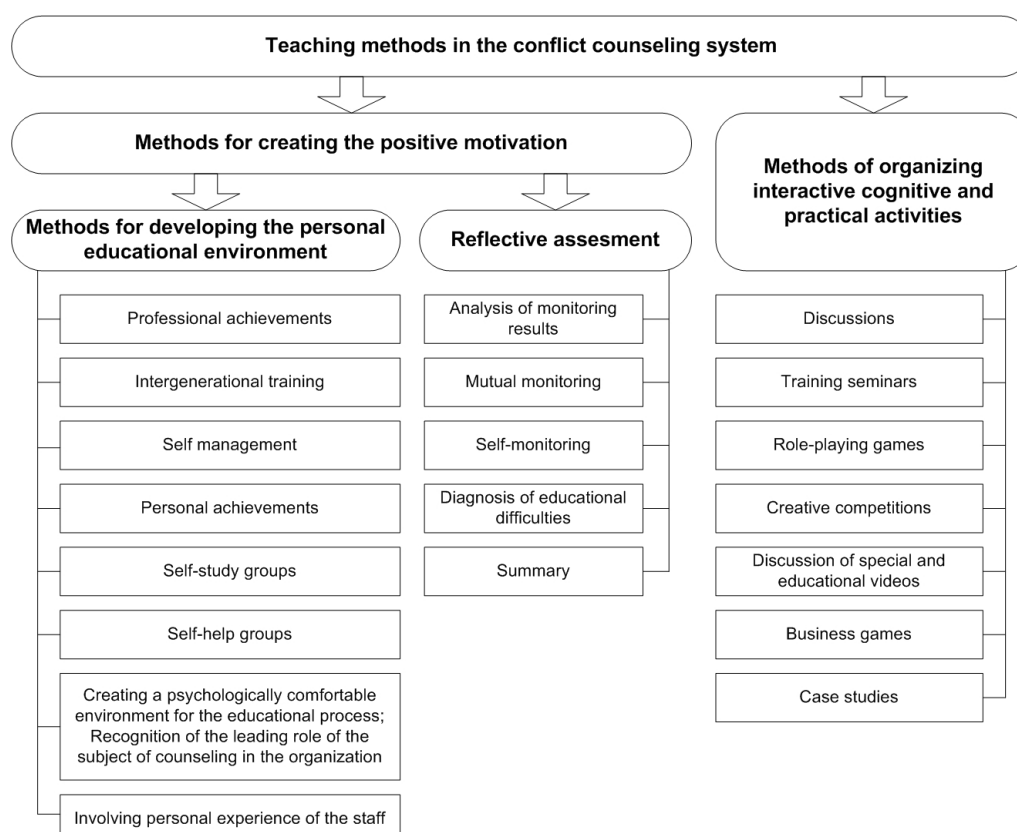
Figure 03. Training methods in the system of conflict counselling in the offices of customs authorities

A bank of educational materials including a set of educational conflict problems based on the professional activities of officials at customs authorities was developed for the effective conflict counselling of customs officials.

The system of professional conflict tasks for conflict and stress management in the organization is represented by the following groups:
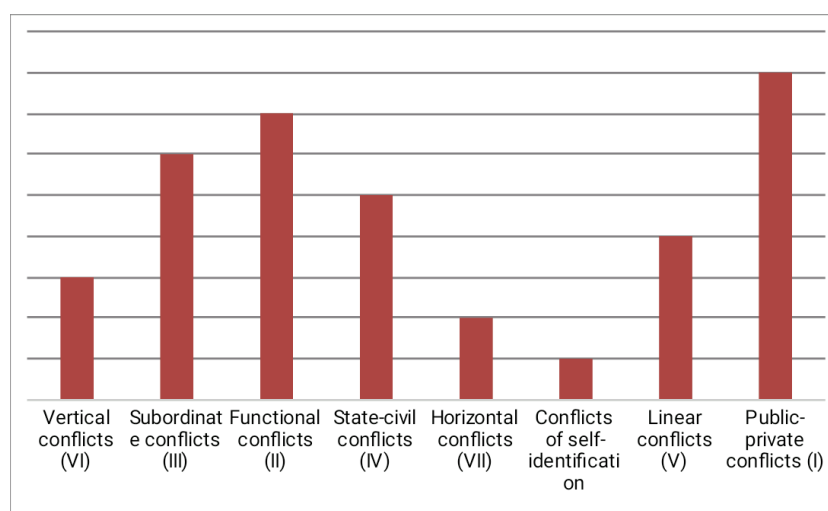
- direct causes of conflicts;
- method of cartographic analysis of conflict interaction;
- functional areas of conflicts in customs bodies;
- principles and technologies of conflict and stress management;
- methods of conflict and stress management;
- sources and functional consequences of the professional stress;
- coping-behaviour strategies of managers (staff) in stressful situations;
- stress management depending on the personality of the manager (staff);
- documentation, regulatory and legal support for the technology of conflict and stress management in the customs authorities.

Due to the integrated training process, in the course of conflict counselling, the staff improve their level of conflict competence.

6. Findings

6.1. Identifying the causes of organizational conflicts in the customs authorities

The authors carried out various surveys in 2014 - 2016 (Kalmykova, Trubitsyn, Bataev, & Tkachev, 2015). One of the goals was to identify the causes of organizational conflicts among customs officials.

Figure 04. Study of types of conflicts in customs authorities

Analysis of the results of surveys (2014-2015) conducted among officials of one of the customs bodies showed that the main causes of destructive conflicts are as follows:

- violation of the principles of ethical business relations;

- imperfection of the system of motivation and promotion of labour activity;

- disagreements on assessment of the ensuring of all types of resources for the customs service;

- disorganization of functional interrelations between structural elements of the organization and the staff;

- absence of programs for the prevention of destructive conflicts and professional stress of the staff;

- stress intensity in relations among the staff and customers;

- work of the staff in the mode of increased conflict;

- discrepancy of the customs officer for professional, moral and ethical, psychological and physical qualities;

- corrupt practices among the staff, etc.

Figure 04 presents the results of the survey of customs officials (2016).

6.2. Study of stress factors of the organizational environment in customs authorities

The stress monitoring among customs officials was conducted to study stress factors in the organizational environment in 2015. This monitoring included two parts: assessment of staff satisfaction with working conditions and assessment of the emotional state of staff. The analysis of the monitoring showed that the amount of staff stress does not exceed the critical level and does not cause disorganization of labour processes but needs attention. The survey showed the following results:

- a degree of burnout: medium;

- depersonalization: medium;

- reduction of personal achievements: high;

- total score: medium degree (See Table 01).

Interviews with respondents have reported that the main factor of burnout is prolonged excessive workload combined with conflict interpersonal relationships.

Table 01. Assessment of staff satisfaction with working conditions

| Characteristics of working conditions	Degree of satisfaction, %				
	Fully satisfied	Rather yes, than no	It is difficult to say	Rather no, than yes	Not satisfied
1. Scope of work performed	3.1	37.5	12.5	29.3	17.6
2. Intensity of work (a sense of time deficit in accomplishing the task)	6.4	13.4	13.6	34.3	32.3
3. Balanced system of workload during the working day (balance)	8.2	16.8	15.4	43.9	15.7
4. Organized labour process including 4.1-4.8 (arithmetic average):	14.3	31.1	18	23	13.5
4.1. Permanent place of work	41.4	30.5	9.6	12.3	6.2
4.2. Arrangement for setting tasks	6.3	37.5	8.4	25	22.8
4.3. Arrangement of distributing tasks among the staff	3.4	28.0	14.6	32.3	21.7
4.4. Equipment performance	25.1	35.3	17.7	15.6	6.3

4.5. Provision of the staff with necessary materials and information for work	13.5	38.8	12.5	19.9	13.5
4.6. Timeliness of necessary materials and information for high-quality work	9.6	26.2	13.5	38.3	12.6
4.7. Use of objective criteria for evaluating of the results of work	4.3	31.0	30.1	26.2	8.5
4.8. Compliance of wages to the efforts expended	7.2	36.7	8.6	26.2	11.3

6.3. Diagnosis of the level of anxiety of customs officers

The goal of the study was to identify the level of professional stress of the staff. The main objective of the study was to compile comprehensive information maps of professional stress for various categories of the staff. The psychological stress scale -PSM-25 (Lemyre et al., 1991) was used in the research. The aim is to measure stressful sensations in somatic, behavioural and emotional factors. The translation and adaptation of the Russian version of the methodology were performed by Vodopyanova (2009). Based on the results of the questionnaire, the following results were revealed: 33.3% of respondents have the average level of stress, 66.7% of respondents have the low level of stress (the total number of respondents is 110).

The aim of the next stage of the research is to diagnose the level of anxiety, the level of conflict, coping strategies of future specialists of the customs service of the Russian Federation. 78 students of Samara State Technical University (specialty *Customs*), who have been trained in the customs office took part in the survey. The Spielberger – Khanin (2009) method was used. An analysis of the reactive anxiety results showed that students have an average level of anxiety.

The purpose of the next study is to analyze the specifics of student behaviour strategies in stressful situations. The Coping Strategy Questionnaire by Lazarus (adapted by Vodopyanova) was used to solve the problems. Consider the results of testing for identification the coping strategy on the example of students of one of the groups. Most respondents in the conflict situation have resorted to cognitive coping strategies (56%), 19% of students - to emotional strategies and 25% - to avoidance (Figure 05). All respondents demonstrated both adaptive and nonadaptive coping strategies with the predominance of the first strategies over the second ones.
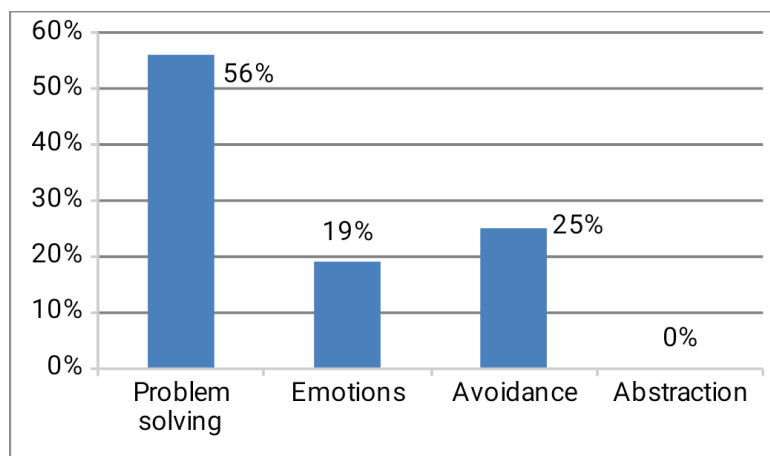
Figure 05. Test results (Test *Coping Strategies*)

Identified particulars of selecting coping strategies in conflict and stressful situations can help future specialists both in dealing with organizational conflicts that have already arisen and in preventing conflicts in their future work in customs offices.

6.4. Identifying the importance of conflict competence for professional activities of managers

To determine the significance of conflict competence for the professional activities of managers and staff, a survey was conducted (2014-2017) including managers and staff of customs authorities (the first and the second group of respondents). The third group of respondents included 454 students of Samara State Technical University (specialty *Customs*). Each group had to assess the need for the formation of conflict competence of the head of the institution. Analysis of the questionnaire results showed that skills in diagnosis, prevention and management of organizational conflicts and the level of professional stress have the highest indicators in terms of significance. The purpose of the other survey was to find out the respondents' opinion on the subject of the training program (formation of conflict competence) and the effectiveness of various forms and methods of training managers and staff at customs offices. During the interviews with the respondents, the key issues of the training sessions were identified:

- main psychological components of professional burnout of customs officers;
- potential conflict forecast among managers (staff) and conflict mapping in the offices of customs authorities;
- stress of various categories of staff at customs authorities;
- possibility for forecasting the conflict behaviour of managers and staff and ways to resolve the conflict;
- causes of organizational conflicts and stresses in the offices of customs authorities;
- stress management of at the institution level and individual level;
- a review of typical situations leading to the personal interest among customs officials resulting in a conflict of interests;
- normative and legal acts against corruption.

On the basis of responses to a questionnaire, the active and interactive teaching methods that encourage innovative, creative and communicative activities and imply the practical use of knowledge and skills of the staff gained in the course of their professional activities and personal experience have high scores.

7. Conclusion

In this study, the authors have developed organizational, methodological, psychological and pedagogical recommendations on the formation of conflict competence of managers and staff at customs authorities; the training methodology used in the process of building the conflict competence of staff; a range of trainings; methodological tools for the process of building conflict competence for customs officers.

The authors believe that the development of a conflict counselling system for managers and staff in customs authorities will improve the social and psychological climate, reduce the level of destructive

conflict and professional stress of all categories of staff. At the same time, there are a number of potential problems and risks associated with the introduction of conflict and stress management technology in the customs authorities:

- insufficient involvement of staff and managers in the process of technology implementation;
- lack of appropriate support for the implementation and use of technology and conflict counselling from all categories of the personnel;
- lack of resources for the effective implementation and use of the technology;
- inadequate qualification of the personnel department that will support the technology;
- difficult integration of programs and activities of conflict and stress management technology to the existing processes of staff management, etc.

Acknowledgments

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