

**RPTSS 2017**  
**International Conference on Research Paradigms Transformation  
in Social Sciences**

**INDICATORS OF PSYCHOLOGICAL SECURITY OF SOCIO-  
PROFESSIONAL GROUP**

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***Abstract***

Today, the psychological science and practice face the task of singling out and systematizing the social risk factors, emerging either at the level of society in general and its specific subsystems (an organization, a working group) or at the level of an individual person in terms of his behavior and lifestyle. Security of a socio-professional group presents as such a condition of social work environment that does not disturb the psychological prerequisites of integrity of the subjects of labor, their adaptability and development. This research aims to substantiate the indicators of psychological security of the staff. The object of the study is a socio-professional group of educational organizations. The authors single out the following psychological indicators of security of a socio-professional group: managerial competence of the executive body; optimum psychological climate; corporate identity, referential significance of professional environment and positive group motivation. The study showed credibly correlative connections between the style of management in an educational establishment (democratic or authoritarian), psychological atmosphere and collective motivation. The study showed that in an educational establishment with a democratic style of management, the employees feel more psychologically secure as compared with employees at an establishment, run in an authoritarian fashion. A tough position of a leader causes the employees' anxiety, which renders the psychological atmosphere unfavorable. In conditions of authoritarian management, the employees share the values and motives of their group less compared to the employees operating in a democratic atmosphere.

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**Keywords:** Psychological security, corporate security, socio-professional group, leadership style, educational establishments.



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## **1. Introduction**

Modern development of Russian society characterized by a growing tension in social interactions and sudden economic changes determines the setting of and solution to the problem of psychological security of an organization as one of particularly important and acute today. The changes in conditions of professional activity in the twenty-first century make it necessary to develop new methods and forms used for successful and effective interaction in the work environment. In modern society, each man has experienced, at least once in his lifetime, a labor conflict in the form of executives' inadequate requirements, negative psychological climate, superior's disagreeable style of management, unfair job appraisal, a threat of discharge, etc. According to the World Health Organization, the number of people faced with aggression and psychological abuse at work, is constantly growing. Corporate security represents not only a form of the organizational and ethical approach, but also a system of practical activity aimed at ensuring security in society, i.e. a social function that helps to build socially-minded society in the country (Perelygina, 2011).

## **2. Problem Statement**

To ensure the employees' efficiency, it is imperative to model such social environment in an organization in which the level of psychological security is bound to rise. Today, in addition to the issue of sanitizing (figuratively speaking) a work environment and designing it as psychologically safe (comfortable), it is necessary to single out and systematize indicators serving as a basis for its psychological monitoring and choose the ways and means that enable obtaining psychology-related information for determining the quality of work environment as a blend of terms and conditions for raising labor productivity and enhancing the employee's personal and professional standards. This research aims to substantiate the indicators of psychological security of the staff.

## **3. Research Questions**

In the Russian psychology the notion of psychological security started to be used in the late 70s through early 80s in relation to people's professional activity in the objective sphere in connection with an intense development of industrial psychology. It is encountered in the unfolded form for the first time in the work by Kotik (1989). The author proposes considering the psychology of security as a branch of psychological science concerned with the psychological aspect of security in different types of activity. He believes that the psychology of security in activity relates to such branches of psychological science as psychology of labor, engineering psychology, military psychology, aviation and space psychology, sports psychology, medical psychology, and judicial psychology presuming that "there is a single common psychological issue, i.e. the study of regularities in human activity in conditions of physical danger and a search of means of ensuring its security with a man, a subject of activity, being in the focus rather than its tool". The ideas and suggestions expressed 30 years ago were continued in modern studies on the psychology of labor, social psychology and psychology of a personality.

The issues related to analysis of psychological security of a socio-professional group are raised by researchers in the context of social, organizational and corporate security.

Relations between people or, more precise, the psychology of relations within a group are also an object of social psychology. Social psychology of security studies psychological phenomena that are characteristic of a group of people. It also deals with psychological phenomena occurring in man in a group under its influence. The breach of psychological security of a group may lead to both collective aggression and psychological disturbances in individual members of the group.

The psycho-acmeological analysis of corporate security of an organization as part of corporate culture is given in works by Derkach & Busygina (2010), Kucher & Kirichenko (2012). The psychology of corporate security is a sphere of research dealing with emergence, functioning, and development of mechanisms used to protect the psychic activity of a subject of labor in its integral condition of productive operation.

Corporate security of an organization reflects the condition of an organizational system in which the probability of actualization of danger contained in the threat factors is minimized. In this approach, the psychological security is regarded together with physical security and presents as such a condition of social work environment that does not disturb the psychological prerequisites of integrity of the subjects of labor, their adaptability and development (Belyaev et al., 2011; Busygina, 2013; Dontsov & Zinchenko, 2011; Kiseleva & Simonovich, 2014; Makeeva, 2009; Novikov, 2008).

Corporate security is a result of multiple-layer relations and interactions in the continuum “man – organization” and “organization – society”. The society is interested in normal development of collective psychic processes. In the course of interactions in the continuum “man – organization”, a combination of interpersonal implications, expectations, values, standards, and stereotypes is created that perform as resources and means of ensuring security in accordance with requirements of organizational and professional operation. Corporate security manifests itself in professional behavior that minimizes and prevents threats to security (Busygina, 2013).

If the vector of a man’s development in the socio-professional group corresponds to the opportunities presented by the organization, a man identifies himself with the organization and develops a sense of responsibility, trust, loyalty to and dependability on the organization. In this case, a man voluntarily rejects some individualistic stereotypes, values and ambitions and embraces the organization’s standards, values and implications. As a result, a balance of relations is frequently established between an individual and a collective subject of corporate security.

In Europe and the US, in the 1960s, environmental psychology emerged as a trend of research. The environmental psychology studies relations between people, psychological processes and socio-physical realities of natural and artificial origin for preserving a man’s wellbeing and fostering “man and milieu” relations. According to this concept, a man’s development proceeds in the dialectical mutual transit of “subject and environment”, i.e. the ambient environment influences human experience and behavior and those same experiences and behavior influence this environment (Kislyakov, 2017; Stokols, 1995).

The environment-based approach is at present a pressing issue and promising trend. Psychologists point out that the environment is organically included in vital functions of a man relates to them and serves as an essential factor of behavioral regulation. So this factor can be regarded as a mechanism of personal development. In Russian psychology, the issue of psychological security of environment is developed by such researchers as Dontsov & Pereylygina (2013), Zinchenko (2011) and others. Among

foreign research works, the best known is the concept of psychological security developed by Edmondson (1999). Many foreign researchers note the connection of psychological security in an organization with labor productivity. They describe the psychological security of environment, in which one can safely speak and voice his thoughts without fear of being rejected, simultaneously feeling protection against negative treatment (Baer, Frese, 2003).

Ensuring corporate security is a controlled process which implies purposeful activity of subjects of work and an option of organizing effective operation aimed at threat prevention.

Today, the psychological science and practice face the task of singling out and systematizing the social risk factors emerging either at the level of society in general and its specific subsystems (an organization, a working group) or at the level of an individual person in terms of his behavior and lifestyle. The social risk factors are adverse determinants and conditions generated by combined activities of people as members of social groups and working groups, which increase the probability or likelihood of an adverse event. Under certain circumstances the social risk factors provoke a man into destructive and aggressive actions.

The main social risk factors that impair corporate security are: macro-factors (social instability and criminalization of society, social stratification, erosion of socio-economic and socio-political subsystems of the society); specifics of functioning of social institutions (aggressiveness of information environment, devaluation of spiritual and moral criteria and the society's tolerance to unlawful behavior); social risk factors of a work environment (psychological violence and pressure, labor intensification, style of management that provokes stress in the organization's employees, problems of balance between employees' interests and motives); negative socio-psychological features of certain employees (erosion of responsibility, infantilism, low adaptability, etc.)

The risks of activation of threats to corporate security grow while their number increases in the event of organizational pathologies so that they gain the nature of an avalanche and ruin the organization. Therefore, the issue of organizational pathologies is essential in the context of threats to corporate security.

The management of such risks calls for designing a whole system of ensuring socio-psychological security of the staff (socio-professional groups), and engrafting psychological resistance and ability to resist social risk factors into the subjects of work.

Our survey of studies into the issues of corporate security enabled us to single out the following psychological indicators of security of a socio-professional group:

- professional competence of personnel in the main area of operations;
- managerial competence of the executive body;
- performing discipline;
- optimum psychological climate;
- corporate identity, referential significance of professional environment and positive group motivation;
- satisfaction with main characteristics of interaction;
- protection against psychological violence.

#### 4. Purpose of the Study

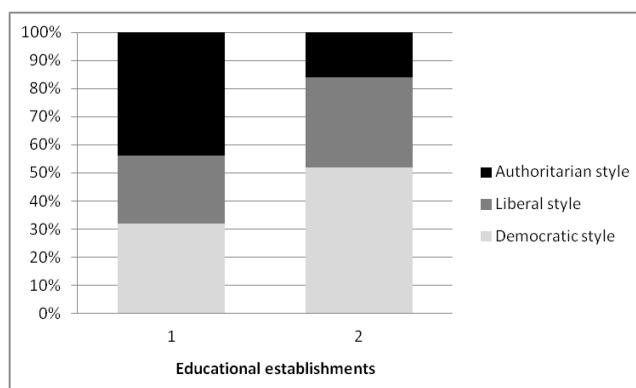
The aim of our research was to study the mutual influence between the management style, group motivation and psychological climate as indicators of psychological security of socio-professional groups. Socio-professional groups (labor collectives) of two educational organizations were used as an object of this study. The total number of respondents was 144 people.

#### 5. Research Methods

Employed for studying the executives' style of managing the staff was the method proposed by V.P. Zakharova and A.L. Zhuravlyova "Determination of executives' style of managing a staff." The questionnaire contains statements that characterize the businesslike qualities of the leader and shows various aspects of interaction between the executives and the staff. For studying the specifics of psychological climate, the authors used the method developed by F. Fidler "The scale of psychological atmosphere." The method is resorted to for appraising the psychological (emotional) atmosphere in a group with the aid of a bipolar scale of interrelations. For studying the group motivation, the authors used the method "Formation of a positive group motivation" by V.A. Rozanova. This method makes it possible to study the positive and negative factors that characterize the group motivation as well as a degree of achieved group motivation, its determination to succeed and obtain positive results of operation.

#### 6. Findings

The research the authors carried out showed that at educational establishment No.1, its executive employs mostly an authoritarian style of management. At educational establishment No.2, the executive employs mostly a democratic style of management (Fig. 1).

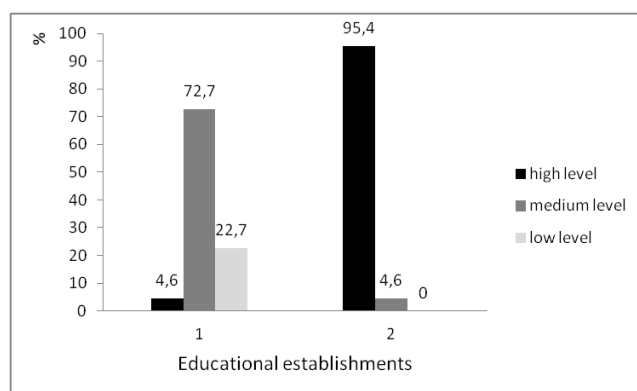


**Figure 01.** Dominant style of management at educational establishments (based on an estimation made by the organization's employees), %

Rather often, an inadequate style of management and a low or insufficient professional competence of the leader are causes of protracted crises and conflicts that are hard to resolve, which disturbs the psychological security of the labor conflict. According to K. Levin, who was the first to single out the management styles in the mid-1930s, there are three cardinally different types of an

executive behavior, i.e. authoritarian, democratic, and liberal. The numerous studies have shown that the most favorable, in terms of psychological security, is the democratic style of leadership in which case the interaction between the subjects of work proceeds at the interpersonal level. The subjects of work use the democratic businesslike communication, including an ability to heed, understand, convince, explain, engage in polemics, retain an emotional equilibrium, and prevent and settle conflicts in a constructive way and by reaching compromises.

The study showed that 73% of employees at educational establishment No.1 estimate the psychological atmosphere in the group at a medium level; around 23% noted the low level of psychological atmosphere (comfort). At educational establishment No.2, other trends were noted, to wit, nearly all the employees (95%) estimated the psychological atmosphere in the group at a high level; a low level was not noted by any of the employees (Fig. 2).

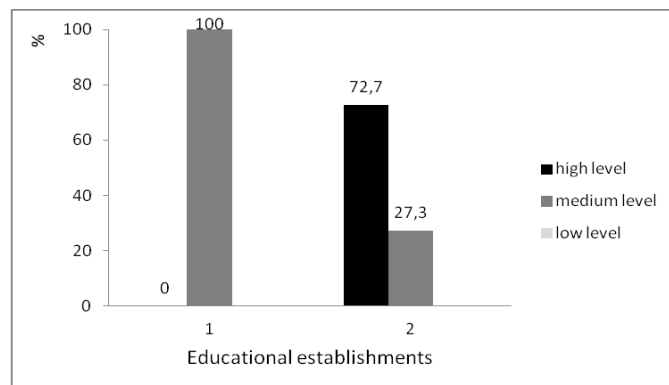


**Figure 02.** Levels of favorable psychological atmosphere in educational establishments

The comparative analysis of the psychological atmosphere at educational establishments with the aid of Pierson's  $\chi^2$  criterion (chi-squared test) showed that the level of favorable psychological atmosphere at educational establishment No.2 (with a democratic style of management) is well above the level of the favorable psychological atmosphere at educational establishment No.1 (with an authoritarian style of management) ( $\chi^2 = 34.017$ ,  $p \leq 0.05$ ).

The issue of creating a comfortably favorable psychological atmosphere in an organization is closely associated with a man's interaction with an unfavorable environment and personal opportunities of a man in overcoming it. A number of studies (Kislyakov et al., 2016; Yasvin, 2000) established that psychological security is expressly the precondition of forming and developing a functional comfort, maintaining the high level of personal and emotional safety and socio-psychological skills as well as optimization of a personality's resources for and capabilities in the activities it pursues. The psychological security of an organization's social environment can be regarded as a result of a psychological reflection of the impact of various aspects of professional activities that manifest themselves in the social interaction between the subjects of work.

The research showed that the employees of educational establishment No.1 estimate their positive group motivation at a medium level. Most employees (73%) of educational establishment No.2 estimate their group motivation at a high level (Fig.3).



**Figure 03.** Levels of positive collective motivation in employees of educational establishments

The comparative analysis of a positive collective motivation among employees of educational establishments with the aid of Pierson's  $\chi^2$  criterion (chi-squared test) showed that the positive collective motivation in educational establishment No.2 (with a democratic style of management) is well above the positive collective motivation of educational establishment No.1 (with an authoritarian style of management) ( $\chi^2 = 40.962$ ,  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

According to Cloke & Goldsmith (2002), the success and efficiency of the organization management are determined by the values' degree of penetration into the daily life of the staff. Actually, at issue is not a mere declaration of values and understanding of their importance, but a real manifestation of values in behavioral models. Belonging to a certain company, an employee accepts its values, goals, achievements and scale of operation for his own.

The principal goal of the leader is efficient management of his employees and formation in them of intrinsic stimuli for productive work. Indisputably, the positive professional motivation of both individual employees and the staff (group) as a whole ensures their productivity, sound relationship both within the group and between the superiors and their subordinates.

In terms of provision of psychological security, it is necessary to obtain a subjective satisfaction of each employee with his work. In performance of his duties, in addition to satisfying certain collective and corporate interests, each employee also fulfills his personally essential needs (to enjoy a certain status in the organization, a high level of material support, recognition on behalf of the management and coworkers, etc.) If his work satisfies these needs, the employee acquires a positive motive for work in the organization and is willing to do everything he can to maintain his status in the company. The existence of a large quantity of employees' unfulfilled needs may be a source of threat to the organization.

A positive collective motivation helps to foster the employees' sense of referential significance and positive corporate identity. Identification with the organization urges the employee to care for wellbeing and security of the staff. The employee's rejection of the organization's policies and culture, plus indifference to its interests and destruction of intra-collective communications means that he is potentially dangerous.

The correlation analysis carried out with the aid of Spearman's method of ranging correlation showed credibly strong ( $p \leq 0.01$ ) correlative connections between the style of management in an educational establishment (democratic or authoritarian), psychological atmosphere and collective motivation (Table 1).

**Table 01.** Correlative connections between style of management at educational establishment, psychological atmosphere and collective motivation

Style of management	Favorable psychological atmosphere	Positive collective motivation
	Correlations	
Authoritarian	- 0.717*	- 0.831*
Liberal	- 0.197	- 0.072
Democratic	0.74*	0.84*

\* Significant correlation at the level of 0.01

## 7. Conclusion

To sum up, it is possible to state that in an educational establishment with a democratic style of management, the employees feel more psychologically secure as compared with employees at an establishment run in an authoritarian fashion. A tough position of a leader causes the employees' anxiety which renders the psychological atmosphere unfavorable. In conditions of authoritarian management, the employees share less the values and motives of their group compared to the employees operating in a democratic atmosphere. Thus, it is reasonable to infer that in an educational establishment the style of management performs as an environment-forming factor that determines the employees' state of the psychological security.

The indicators of psychological security of a socio-professional group and their manifestation in characteristics of the subjective wellbeing of its participants (employees of the organization) serve as directions for development of a program of ensuring the psychological security of the organization's social environment. From the point of view of organizational and operative determinants of the organization's corporate security, the following operations ought to be performed:

- establishment of a personally confidential and a democratic style of interaction in the organization both between employees and between the executive and his subordinate employees;
- fostering identity- and value-related principles of the organization and loyalty to the interests of the organization;
- preventive care for the collective psychological atmosphere, prevention of crises, conflicts, strained situations, professional deformations among the employees, within the staff and in the organization in general;
- monitoring a dynamic process of transforming and eliminating the threats to corporate security and their motive forces.

## Acknowledgments

This article was prepared with the support of the Russian State Social University.

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