

Expression of Individual Psychological Personality Traits Depending on the Level of Anger Repression (A Case Study of a Sample Group of Law Enforcement Officers)

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Abstract. The article examines a problem of anger expression, control and repression in the framework of studying individual psychological personality traits of law enforcement officers. The research was done on a sample group of 230 persons. The whole sample group of subjects aged from 22 to 45 years was split into two groups on the basis of two characteristics: 1) level of anger repression; 2) participation in military operations. The first group (EG – 1) included participants in military operations with low score for the “level of anger repression” parameter (N1=42), and the second (EG–2) included officers who did not take part in military operations and had high score on the “level of anger repression” parameter (N2=58). Comparative analysis using Mann-Whitney U test made it possible to find significant distinctions between the two groups: subjects with a high level of anger repression demonstrated a particular combination of individual psychological personality traits in comparison to those with lower level of anger repression. Correlation analysis using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient r_s for each empirical group has shown the existence of different manifestations of individual psychological personality traits in law enforcement officers.

Introduction

The present stage of social development is characterized by significant social, economic, political and sociocultural contradictions. On this background there naturally springs up an urgent need to study the range of a person’s emotional reaction to various situations in order to optimize interpersonal and business interaction. High dynamics of our life and uncertainty of social expectations to a person and his or her activities require better understanding of such category as anger, a study of its psychological nature and essence, forms of its expression, as well as its ambiguous role in the process of human communication.

Attempts to uncover the nature of anger were made in antiquity (by Homer in the VIII century B.C., by Aristotle in the III century B.C.) as exhibition of passion, energy controlling human behavior. Later on theoretical and empirical studies of anger were presented in scientific works in the context of studying the emotional sphere of a person [1].

Of the brightest explorers of the anger problem in XX century was Charles Spielberger who defined *anger* as “*an emotional state describing sensations the intensity of which varies from mildly expressed irritation or annoyance to rage and fury, which is accompanied by an activation of the autonomous nervous system.*” [2] According to C. Spielberger anger can be explosive, that is directed outwards, or implosive, directed on the person himself. Explosive anger is expressed in aggressive actions, accusations, insults, dialogues in a raised voice, moral or other pressure etc. Implosive anger is manifested in self-criticism, sense of guilt, depression, self-harm, self-isolation etc. One kind of anger could turn into another; there is also a mixture of two kinds of anger, for example, resentment when a person is angry with another and at the same time with him- or herself, as they are “swallowing” their initial anger. A hysterical fit also could be a result of collision of two kinds of anger (N. Linde). Thus, C. Spielberger considered anger both as a state and as a persistent

personal trait, and also noted that anger could be expressed outside or could be suppressed and eventually a person could develop an ability to control its manifestations [2].

A great number of psychological problems is connected with suppressed or repressed feelings that a person does not dare or does not allow him- or herself to display and to experience. Suppression and repression are primary psychological defense mechanisms, helping a person to remove from his or her consciousness and to forbid realization of certain feelings and desires [3]. If a feeling is suppressed, it looks and feels like there is some force trying to break loose outside, literally from inside the body of the person, and the person is trying to constrain it and to keep it inside. If the feeling is not so significant, and a person has a strong Ego, the repressed feeling or experience allegedly does not trouble him or her, but the person grows an armor-plating of character and muscle armor helping to restrain them. If the depth of feeling is great, and a person does not have sufficient energy, the feeling is manifested in hysterical attacks, unconscious anxiety, fits of anger, psychosomatic symptoms etc. [4]. A person is dissatisfied with external circumstances, but the reason of his or her discontent could be in his or her own chronically repressed feelings.

It should be noted that anger is a disapproved and a socially dangerous feeling, this is why practically all people tend to constrain and repress their anger. The problem of anger expression, control and repression becomes particularly significant in examination of the emotional and personal domain of law enforcement officers for whom it is extremely important to consider, to understand and to recognize emotional state of other people in the course of performance of their professional duties [5, 6], because the work of law enforcement officers is complex, many-sided, often unpredictable and accompanied by situations requiring constant emotional tension. According to the results of multiple studies, anger repression and lack of resources for its conscious control could lead to emergence of symptoms and development of pathological syndromes, as well as dysfunctions in the work of cardiovascular system, gastrointestinal path, nervous system, provoking development of oncological diseases [4]. Knowledge of one's own peculiarities of various emotions' expression, in particular anger expression and control, helps law enforcement officers to cope with their professional duties much more efficiently and much quicker, and has a positive impact on the results of their professional work and their health [7, 8].

Methodology. In order to study the interrelation between individual psychological personality traits and the level of anger repression in law enforcement officers an empirical research consisting of three stages was conducted: an empirical sample group was formed at *the first stage*; a bank of diagnostic procedures was formed at *the second stage* with subsequent psychodiagnostics of the subjects and processing of the obtained data. The obtained data were analyzed and interpreted and main conclusions were made *at the third stage*.

Sample group. 230 people - law enforcement officers aged between 22 and 45 years were examined. Subjects from the whole sample group were selected by two criteria: 1) level of anger repression; 2) participation in military operations. The level of anger repression was measured using "The State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2" (STAXI-2) proposed by C. Spielberg. The first group (EG – 1) included former participants in military actions with low scores for the "level of anger repression" (N1=42), and the second group (EG – 2) included officers who did not take part in military operations and had high scores for the "level of anger repression" (N2=58).

Methods and techniques. In our study we used the following methods and techniques: "Five Personality Factor Questionnaire" by McCrae, P. Costa as adapted by A.B. Khromov [9], "Hardiness survey" by S. Maddi as adapted by D.A. Leontyev [10], "Freiburger aggression factors inventory – FAF" by R. Hampel, H. Selg as adapted by O.A. Shamshikova, T.V. Belashina [11], "The State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory-2" (STAXI-2) by C. Spielberger as adapted by O.A. Shamshikova, T.V. Belashina [12].

Processing of the results. Central tendency was evaluated and average values were calculated, comparative analysis using Mann-Whitney U test was performed, and interrelation between the studied parameters was examined using Spearman's rank correlation coefficient r_s . The results were processed using SPSS 19.0 statistical program. Reliability of the obtained data is not lower than 5 % significance level.

Research results. According to the results of central tendency evaluation it was established that the parameters most typical for respondents in EG-1 are “anger as a trait” ($M_x=16.5$), “reactive aggression” ($M_x=4.6$), “irritability” ($M_x=2.6$), “emotional instability” ($M_x=44.9$), and “expressiveness” ($M_x=52.5$). The most typical parameters for the subjects from EG-2 were the following: “internal anger control” ($M_x=27$), “anger repression” ($M_x=25.8$), “inhibition of aggression” ($M_x=5.6$), “hardiness” ($M_x=100.6$), and “self-control” ($M_x=60.4$).

Further, we evaluated the reliability of differences by the studied parameters between the respondents from EG-1 and EG-2 using Mann–Whitney nonparametric U test. The obtained results are shown below in table 1.

Table 1. Comparison of the subjects from EG-1 (N=42) and EG-2 (N=58) by the studied parameters.

Variables	Average values		Mann-Whitney U test	Level of significance
	EG-1	EG-2		
Anger as a trait	26.39	16.34	106.50	0.007 **
Irascibility	24.84	17.68	136.00	0.050 *
Internal anger control	11.13	29.52	21.50	0.000 **
Anger repression	10.03	30.48	0.50	0.000 **
Reactive aggression	24.97	17.57	133.50	0.046 *
Irritability	26.79	16.00	99.00	0.003 **
Inhibition of aggression	26.34	16.39	107.50	0.006 **
Readiness for aggression	25.39	17.20	125.50	0.029 *
Involvement	14.58	26.55	87.00	0.001 **
Control	15.82	25.48	110.50	0.010 **
Risk-taking	17.03	24.43	133.50	0.047 *
Hardiness	15.82	25.48	110.50	0.010 **
Trustfulness	16.39	24.98	121.50	0.020 *
Emotional lability	26.45	16.30	105.50	0.007 **

Note: *- $p \leq 0.05$; ** - $p \leq 0.01$.

On the basis of the obtained results it is possible to assume that subjects from EG-2 tend to exhibit the propensity to constrain their fits of anger, they appear calm and imperturbable (internal anger control, anger repression). They tend to exhibit full involvement in their activities, allowing them to get new experience and knowledge (involvement). They are characterized by a high level of hardiness that helps them to neutralize internal over-tension in stressful situations (hardiness, risk-taking).

Subjects from EG-1 are characterized by the tendency to experience anger for a long period of time (irascibility). They tend to react them quickly and resolutely in various situations and to display aggression openly, which indicates increased irritability (excitability, reactive aggression). Examinees from EG-1 direct their anger on the object that invoked it (readiness for aggression). They are characterized by mood swings (emotional lability).

In order to examine the interrelation between individual psychological personality traits and anger repressions in the subjects we conducted correlation analysis using Spearman’s r_s criterion separately for each empirical group.

Analysis of the data obtained for EG-1 (N1=42) has shown that the subjects tend to experience anger for a long time even in situations with an insignificant stimulant. Anger they experience is intensified by a high level of irritability that leads to escalation of negative emotions and failure to control their emotional state, as well as mood swings. Intensive experience of anger and increased irritability could be manifested in officers’ desire to dominate and supervise. At the same time they are not inclined to take risks and have a low level of hardiness, which is manifested in lower stress resistance and higher internal stress in critical situations. Low scores on involvement and control parameters together with higher self-aggression could be expressed in the absence of real interest to professional work, and in the belief that actions influence the result.

Correlation analysis of variables for EG-2 (N2=42) has shown that in situations of emotional stimulation the subjects tend to control their anger expression and frequently to repress it. They manifest a high level of hardiness and sociability which improves their stress resistance. It can be assumed that it is struggle and active actions that bring desirable results. Subjects from EG-2 are characterized by positive attitude to themselves and to people around them which helps them to perceive difficult situations as less significant and to cope with stress more efficiently. High level of hardiness and affection is displayed in friendly attitude to other people and in tendency to help them. It is possible that subjects from EG-2 can cope with stress more efficiently due to their ability to support, sympathize with and help other people. High level of affection and low level of outward anger expression interfere with expressing anger to other people due to their positive attitude to others and sense of personal responsibility for their well-being.

Summary

Thus, as a result of the study we conducted the following was established:

1. There is an interrelation between individual psychological personality traits and the level of anger repression in law enforcement officers.
2. Participants in military operations with a high level of anger repression manifest a special combination of individual psychological personality traits. They potentially belong to a risk group and need a complex of actions (special trainings, psychotechnologies, business and role-playing games, as well as individual work), helping them to cope with anger.
3. Law enforcement officers who did not take part in military operations and have a low level of anger repression are characterized by a high level of hardiness and stress-resistance. They tend to exhibit full involvement in their activities, they practically do not express their anger outside to other people due to their positive attitude to others and sense of personal responsibility for their well-being.

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