



ANALYSIS OF SOCIAL-PSYCHOLOGICAL COMPETENCES OF A CUSTOMS SERVICE OFFICER

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Abstract

This article discusses the results of the degree of formation of social and psychological competencies, some formative factors of the empirical study of customs service employees. The article also reveals the model developed by the author, social and psychological competencies of customs service employees.

Keywords: Customs, customs officer, competence, competence, socio-psychological competence, expert inquiry.

Introduction

The scope of economic cooperation among the countries of the world is expanding, and new demands are emerging. To implement these and to step in line with the global community, it is necessary to organize activities in a systematic manner and to train customs officers who possess a modern worldview, are forward-looking, and whose knowledge and skills correspond to the current process of globalization. Neglecting global trends occurring in the economy during the professional training of personnel will inevitably lead to negative consequences. The effectiveness of the customs system's activities and its continuous improvement are directly and comprehensively connected to the potential of its personnel. One of the most important conditions for organizing customs activities at the level of international standards is the fundamental improvement in the training of highly qualified employees and the enhancement of their professional competence.

There are numerous scientific studies conducted abroad on the psychological aspects of customs service employees. However, in our republic, there remain many aspects in this area that require further research. Based on the above, we also carried out initial experimental studies on the general socio-psychological condition of customs service employees.



LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

Taking into account that the topic we have chosen is being studied within the framework of the science of social psychology, it is appropriate to emphasize that it is always studied within the scope of groups as well as in the context of group and intergroup relationships (A.A. Asmolov, A.A. Krylov, A.V. Petrovsky, A.K. Batarshev, B.F. Lomov, G.M. Andreeva, E.I. Chugunova, E.I. Kuzmin, K.I. Selchenok, M.V. Bobneva, M.K. Bityanova, N.I. Viktorov, Yu.A. Zhukov and others). In the research of several foreign, Russian, and Uzbek scholars, interpersonal relationships and their consequences were directly studied (A. Zhuravlev, N.S. Safoev, A.V. Karpov, A. Kovaleva, B. Mosner, B. Sinderman, D. Myers, E.A. Klimov, E.L. Maslova, I.N. Semenov, L.I. Shakhova, M. Enikeev, N. Nikiforova, O. Khaitov, R. Paul, S.P. Gerard, F. Herzberg, Sh.M. Shoimova, Sh.R. Barotov, Sh. Ulugova, E.N. Sattarov and others).

In general, issues related to the competency aspects of customs bodies, enhancement of personnel potential, and socio-psychological competence have been studied by researchers such as A.Ya. Kibanova, B.M. Genkin, V.V. Makrusev, V.G. Ignatov, V.I. Annenkov, V.I. Tonkonog, V.R. Vesnin, N.N. Prosyannikov, and O.V. Sofronova [8].

In CIS countries, problems related to increasing personnel potential in the customs system, psychological, pedagogical, and ethical aspects of professional training of customs officers, formation of social competence, psycho-pedagogical aspects and challenges of professional selection have been studied by A. Krasilnikov, A. Maksimov, A. Solopov, V.V. Rogachev, V. Kovalyov, V. Krasheninnikov, V. Kukharenko, V. Lutovinov, V. Timofeev, D. Agranat, E. Balashova, E. Makhov, L. Alekseeva, L. Kachkina, M. Balandin, M. Sheinis, N. Berezhnaya, N. Blinov, R. Zhenzherukha, S. Chernyshov, E. Beletskiy, Yu. Kubanin, Yu. Samolaev [5].

At this point, it is appropriate to touch upon the concept of “competence.” The term “competence” was first used in the fields of philosophy, mathematics, psychology, and sociology in the 1950s–60s of the 20th century and referred to a person's ability to carry out a certain activity. In the definitions provided by A. Klapper, A.V. Khutorskaya, A. Zimnyaya, A.M. Aronova, B.D. Elkonin, V.A. Bolotova, V.V. Bashev, J. Raven, J. Winterton, I.D. Frumina, N. Chomsky, P.G. Shchedrovitsky, T.M. Kovaleva, F. Delamare, and others, “competence” is interpreted as the behavior or conduct required in a specific activity, while “competency” is regarded



as the degree of conformity to this requirement - in other words, the final result of demonstrating competence.

The terms “competence” and “competency” are interpreted as a “person's knowledge-based, socially and professionally defined personal and intellectual experience” [9]. In the works of American scholar N. Chomsky, competence is interpreted as the ability of a person to carry out a certain activity [1].

The concept of socio-psychological competence refers to a person’s social behavior and, in a broad sense, defines the individual’s ability to adapt and function effectively in specific social situations. The attributes of social competence are considered to be social skills, the ability to pursue goals, and the quality of interpersonal relationships - all of which influence not only a person’s personal life but also their professional activity and psychological health. This includes the ability to respond to criticism, to change the destructive behavior of others, to resolve conflicts, to end or begin a conversation at the right time, to apologize, to admit one's weaknesses, to properly initiate a conversation, organizational ability, the establishment of necessary relationships, the expression of emotions, and many other skills. Key components of social skills include verbal and non-verbal communication abilities, empathy, and others [2].

Analyzing the structure of socio-psychological competence does not provide an exact answer regarding its components. The following components are also mentioned: communication ability, emotional intelligence, the ability to understand colleagues, creativity, sincerity, listening ability, ability to collaborate, patience, self-control, self-discipline, empathy, activeness, and politeness.

Table 1 presents the socio-psychological competence model proposed by E. Payton (2000) [3].

Table 1 E. Payton’s Model of Socio-Psychological Competence

Social - psychological competence		
Intrapersonal factors	Interpersonal factors	Skills that have influence on activities in team (group)
Self-assessment; Attitudes towards oneself and towards surrounding people; Type of personality.	Social perception; Listening skills; Skills of verbal behavior; Skills of non-verbal behavior; Skills of establishing reciprocal relations.	Leadership characteristics; Skills of solving conflict situations; Degree of self-control; Tact; Problem-solving skills.

Socio-psychological competence is the ability to communicate effectively with others during the process of working with people, to organize a team, to mobilize them toward productive work, and to fully demonstrate one’s leadership qualities. This concept is also often used as a synonym for the term “communicative competence” [10].

Based on the above analysis, we can state that socio-psychological competence is the ability to make constructive use of the knowledge, skills, and abilities necessary for interacting with people in professional activity conditions.

RESULTS

Based on the findings of our research, we used the “360-degree evaluation” method to study the level and presence of socio-psychological competence among customs service employees.

The “360-degree evaluation” is a method that provides structured insights about an employee’s competencies, reflecting their behavior in real working conditions and the business-like qualities they demonstrate. This method not only reveals the presence of these qualities but also shows how clearly they are manifested in the workplace, making it a meaningful tool for evaluation. The process of self-assessment by an individual can serve as a valuable source of feedback.

The “360-degree evaluation” allows us to form the most objective view of the employee’s potential and the level of their skill development.

In our research, we used the following parameters to evaluate the level of competency development:



The competency is not expressed. The employee has no desire (interest) to develop it. (The employee is not motivated to develop it.)

The competency is in the development stage. It is not always evident under all working conditions, but the employee has already understood its importance and is striving to improve it.

The competency is adequately expressed. The employee has reached a basic level of experience that enables them to demonstrate this quality in many work situations.

The competency is developed above average. The employee can demonstrate it not only in standard but also in challenging work conditions.

The competency is highly developed. It is demonstrated as a leadership quality. The employee displays this competency in all work conditions.

Competency Levels Classification:

Level 1 – Intuitive (Low): Socio-psychological competencies (SPCs) are not expressed. The employee is not motivated to develop them.

Level 2 – Normative-Intuitive (Below Average): SPCs are in the development phase and are not always evident under all work conditions. However, the employee already understands their importance and is trying to develop them.

Level 3 – Normative (Average): SPCs are adequately expressed. A basic level of experience allows the quality to be shown in most work situations.

Level 4 – Active: SPCs are developed above average and are demonstrated not only in standard but also in challenging work environments.

Level 5 – Creative (High): A high level of SPC development. These competencies are displayed as leadership traits and are demonstrated in all working conditions.

Table 2 below shows the percentage ratio of the results obtained from the expert survey conducted using the “360-degree evaluation” method.

Table 2 Results Obtained from the Expert Survey Based on the “360-Degree Evaluation” Method (n=50)

Socio-Psychological Competencies	Level of Competency Development				
	1. Intuitive	2. Normative-Intuitive	3. Normative (Average)	4. Active	5 Creative (High)
1. Professionally Significant Qualities: Memory, Attention, Perception	4%	2%	4%	46%	44%
2. Effectiveness in Decision-Making and Thinking Characteristics	2%	8%	20%	34%	36%
3. Emotional and Volitional Stability	2%	4%	18%	28%	48%
4. Stress Tolerance	4%	4%	20%	26%	46%
5. Communicative Qualities and Influence on the Interlocutor	4%	4%	14%	48%	30%
6. Self-Control	0%	2%	10%	60%	28%
7. Conflict Management	2%	2%	12%	76%	8%
8. Goal Orientation and Motivation	0%	6%	36%	32%	26%
9. Level of Professional Proficiency	1%	10%	60%	22%	6%
Total	20%	42%	194%	372%	272%

In the table above, the percentage levels of competency development of 50 customs service employees, as evaluated by experts, are presented. Nearly all competency levels are concentrated in stages 4 and 5, except for “Level of Professional Proficiency,” which remains at stage 3.

DISCUSSION

Socio-psychological competence is a characteristic of the subject of a specific type of activity, and its content directly stems from the purpose and structure of that activity, as well as from its unique requirements. Various components of socio-psychological competence define success or failure in different areas of customs activity and determine the subject’s compatibility with the nature and object of the activity [11].

Based on the above analysis, and relying on the results obtained from experimental trials and expert surveys, we present an analysis of the socio-psychological competencies of customs service employees:

1. Professionally Significant Qualities: Memory, Attention, Perception

The professional perception of a customs officer includes the following skills and abilities: recognizing low and insufficiently clear sounds, endurance of the auditory analyzer, distinguishing small and distant objects, endurance of the visual analyzer,



detecting invisible elements during profiling, and identifying individuals blending into crowds.

Professional attention implies the ability of the customs officer to maintain concentration over a long period, to focus attention on a specific object, to switch attention quickly, to divide attention effectively, and to avoid distraction under fear or unexpected external influences.

Professional memory should include the ability to retain service-related information for extended periods, to quickly memorize and accurately reproduce material perceived through visual and auditory channels, and to maintain high levels of readiness.

This may also be referred to as profiling competencies, as individuals engaged in profiling are required to process cognitive tasks with high precision.

2. Effectiveness in Decision-Making and Thinking Characteristics

The decision-making and thinking skills of a customs officer include the ability to identify the key information from what is received, to effectively use time factors during decision-making (speed and flexibility of thinking), to change decisions when the situation changes (independence of thinking, analysis, and synthesis skills), to possess a sufficient level of general intelligence and learning capacity, to maintain high working speed, and to process available information under time constraints.

3. Emotional and Volitional Stability

Emotional and volitional stability refers to the ability to direct emotions and their expression toward achieving defined goals, patience, restraint from displaying external emotional reactions, resilience to physical and psychological overload (such as eliminating the negative effects of fatigue and exhaustion), maintaining the functions of visual and auditory analyzers at a necessary level to perform duties, self-regulation (i.e., the ability to control emotions and preserve mental clarity), emotional sensitivity, and discipline.

4. Stress Tolerance

Stress tolerance is determined by a set of personal qualities. Such qualities allow an employee to endure significant intellectual, volitional, and emotional stress



caused by the specific nature of professional activity without it leading to harmful consequences for themselves, their health, or others. This includes adaptability to new situations, mobilization and effective response in critical conditions, maintaining composure, the ability to find optimal ways out of stressful situations (constructive response to problems), and consideration of situational specifics.

5. Communicative Qualities and Influence on the Interlocutor

A customs officer's communication abilities include skills for working with people, such as:

Establishing and maintaining communication with various categories of people (verbal skills);

Flexibility in communication, impartiality, and freedom from biases or personal likes/dislikes;

The ability to purposefully influence a conversation partner (short and effective communication under time constraints);

Sensitivity to others' attitudes, interests, and emotions;

Ability to summarize and interpret information correctly;

Ability to resolve problematic communication situations, including conflicts.

This competency also involves the ability to defend one's position, to persuade the interlocutor based on clear arguments, even in the face of resistance, to demonstrate diplomacy, to make a positive impression on others, and to influence the conversation partner and take control of the situation in difficult circumstances.

6. Self-Assessment

Self-assessment is a personal quality of the customs officer that is reflected in having an adequate attitude toward oneself, constructive self-criticism, confidence in one's professional skills, a constructive approach to external evaluation, aspiration for success, maintaining work performance even under conditions of doubt or indifference, and expressing confidence in professional judgments.

7. Conflict Management

Conflict management is a no less important competency for customs officers. It includes diplomacy, a non-confrontational behavioral style (cooperation in which



the interests of both parties are equally satisfied), and understanding the mechanisms for the emergence and resolution of conflict situations.

8. Goal Orientation and Motivation

This is expressed in forming an active life strategy and maintaining a clearly defined life position. It includes developing behavior aimed at achieving success and activity goals, a conscientious attitude to work, the ability to overcome obstacles, professional self-evaluation (experiencing outcomes as significant personal events and recognizing others' success), the ability to independently set goals and determine ways to achieve them, seeing development prospects during decision-making, and forming a "future vision."

9. Level of Professional Proficiency

Research results showed that for an employee to perform official duties successfully, they must possess a system of specific professional qualities consisting of complex skills and abilities that support the manifestation of their competencies in leading activities. Along with knowledge, these qualities determine the level of professional preparedness of the employee.

CONCLUSION

Based on our work analyzing the socio-psychological competencies of customs service employees, we arrived at the following conclusions:

It was determined that special attention must be given to the psychological preparedness of customs service employees in the formation of their socio-psychological competencies (SPCs). Since psychological preparedness is a complex component of professional mastery and consists of a set of developed psychological traits, it must correspond to the unique and important psychological characteristics required in operational service activities and serve as one of the necessary conditions for its successful implementation. In this context, it was revealed that the employee must possess such skills as attention, memory, perception, thinking, willpower, cognitive processes, communication skills, organizational ability, and the ability to make quick decisions - all crucial for professional activity.



By defining the parameters for assessing the degree of competency development (1. Competency not expressed, 2. Competency in development stage, 3. Competency adequately expressed, 4. Competency developed above average, 5. Competency highly developed), a five-level developmental scale for socio-psychological competencies (SPCs) was identified:

Level 1 – Intuitive (Low)

Level 2 – Normative-Intuitive (Below Average)

Level 3 – Norm-Compliant (Average)

Level 4 – Active

Level 5 – Creative (High)

Competencies such as socio-psychological, psychological, and psychophysiological competencies, which ensure an employee's overall competence, are essential in accordance with established standards. These can be effectively applied in hiring candidates, rotation decisions, promotions, and certification processes.

The analysis of customs service employees' socio-psychological competencies was carried out by evaluating the following professionally significant qualities: memory, attention, perception, effectiveness in decision-making and thinking characteristics, emotional and volitional stability, stress tolerance, communicative abilities and influence on the interlocutor, self-assessment, conflict management, goal orientation and motivation, and level of professional proficiency.

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