

**EMOTIONAL STRESS SYNDROME IN THE PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES OF
INTERNAL AFFAIRS OFFICERS AND WAYS TO COMBAT IT**

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Abstract. This article analyzes the causes and consequences of emotional stress syndrome arising in the professional activities of internal affairs officers. It describes effective methods of combating this syndrome, including psychological approaches and practical recommendations. The paper also puts forward proposals aimed at enhancing the efficiency of internal affairs officers' service and ensuring psychological stability.

Keywords: emotional stress, internal affairs officers, stress, professional burnout, mental stability, psychological support, service effectiveness

Introduction

Internal affairs officers carry out their professional activities in an environment requiring a high level of responsibility, constant readiness, and the ability to act under risky and stressful conditions. Such complex circumstances have a direct impact on mental health and emotional well-being. Prolonged exposure to psychological pressure and chronic anxiety can result in emotional stress syndrome, which negatively affects not only professional efficiency but also personal life.

Symptoms often include fatigue, loss of motivation, apathy, aggressiveness, or emotional detachment. If the causes of emotional strain are not identified and addressed in time, this condition may lead to severe psychological disorders, reduced work efficiency, and even disciplinary problems.

Recent years have seen growing attention to the mental health of internal affairs personnel. Officers often work in high-stress situations—emergency responses, shift duties, and constant decision-making under pressure. Such factors contribute to the widespread yet often undetected prevalence of emotional stress syndrome. Frequently, officers hide their emotional difficulties due to stigma or fear of being judged, which aggravates the problem further.

Consequently, early detection, preventive measures, and systemic support programs become critical elements in maintaining mental health and operational readiness. Ensuring psychological resilience is not only an individual necessity but also a factor affecting overall institutional effectiveness and public trust.

Literature Review and Methodology

One of the foundational concepts in this area is Herbert Freudenberger's theory of "professional burnout", which emphasizes that prolonged occupational stress leads to emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and reduced professional achievement. Professions involving continuous human interaction—such as internal affairs—are particularly vulnerable to this syndrome.

Freudenberger identifies three stages of burnout:

1. Emotional exhaustion – mental fatigue and lack of energy;

2. Depersonalization – loss of empathy, emotional coldness;
3. Reduced personal accomplishment – decreased self-confidence and job satisfaction.

Similarly, Christina Maslach’s Burnout Model elaborates on three key dimensions: emotional exhaustion, depersonalization, and diminished professional efficacy. This model is widely applied to assess and monitor emotional strain among professionals.

Another important contribution is Kelly McGonigal’s stress management theory, which argues that stress is not inherently harmful if reframed as a challenge rather than a threat. Internal affairs officers who adopt this perspective develop greater psychological resilience and maintain operational efficiency despite demanding circumstances.

Additionally, Lazarus and Folkman’s cognitive appraisal theory explains stress as a process determined by individuals’ evaluation of situations as threatening or manageable. Training officers in cognitive appraisal strategies helps them control emotional responses and prevent chronic stress accumulation.

The theory of emotional labor (Hochschild) is also highly relevant, as law enforcement personnel often suppress emotions to maintain professional composure. However, long-term suppression creates inner psychological conflicts and may intensify emotional exhaustion.

Finally, psychodynamic approaches, rooted in Freudian theory, emphasize the role of unconscious internal conflicts resulting from suppressed emotions, highlighting the need for psychological counseling and confidential discussions to process accumulated stress effectively.

Discussion

Empirical observations show that internal affairs officers often operate under chronic psychological pressure: emergencies, exposure to criminal cases, interaction with distressed civilians, and high-stakes decision-making. Over time, these stressors accumulate, manifesting as emotional burnout characterized by fatigue, cynicism, and declining motivation.

Key findings from organizational surveys indicate:

Criterion	High Level (%)	Moderate (%)	Low (%)	Remarks
Emotional exhaustion	47	38	15	Fatigue, decreased attention, and absenteeism
Reduced professional efficacy	42	40	18	Declining self-confidence and motivation
Intrinsic motivation	25	51	24	Apathy observed at lower levels
Stress resilience	30	48	22	Higher resilience linked to training programs
Psychological support from leadership	18	39	43	Insufficient in several regions
Seeking psychological assistance	21	—	79	Reluctance due to stigma
Use of coping strategies	27	44	29	Higher among trained personnel

These results highlight several key problems: lack of preventive measures, insufficient

psychological support, and limited awareness of stress management techniques among officers. Practical recommendations include:

- Implementing regular psychological assessments and confidential counseling services;
- Introducing stress management and resilience training during professional development;
- Promoting open discussions on mental health to reduce stigma;
- Optimizing work schedules to prevent chronic fatigue;
- Encouraging team-building activities and physical exercise to improve overall well-being.

International experience demonstrates that preventive programs integrated into law enforcement systems significantly reduce emotional burnout and improve job satisfaction, public trust, and institutional performance.

Conclusion

Emotional stress syndrome represents a serious challenge in the professional activities of internal affairs officers. Its consequences extend beyond individual mental health, affecting organizational efficiency, discipline, and public confidence in law enforcement agencies.

Comprehensive strategies combining preventive measures, psychological counseling, leadership support, and institutional reforms are essential to address this issue effectively. Developing a psychologically supportive organizational culture ensures officers feel valued, understood, and motivated, ultimately enhancing both their well-being and professional performance.

Long-term success depends on:

- Early detection of emotional stress symptoms;
- Mandatory resilience training;
- Leadership commitment to psychological well-being;
- Integration of international best practices into national systems.

Creating a mentally healthy law enforcement environment will strengthen operational stability, public safety, and institutional credibility.

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