HSR (LONDON),
HOUGHTON STREET REVIEW JOURNAL
ISSN: 2058-5519|Impact factor-15.9
http://houghtonstreetreview.com/index.php/hsr

DIAGNOSIS OF SOFT SKILLS LEVELS OF CANDIDATES APPLYING FOR LAW ENFORCEMENT POSITIONS

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Abstract

This article examines the issue of diagnosing soft skills among candidates applying for service in law enforcement agencies. It substantiates the need to transition from a traditional selection model focused primarily on assessing knowledge, physical fitness, and general intellectual ability to a comprehensive system of psychological evaluation of professionally significant supra-professional competencies. Modern international approaches to candidate assessment are analyzed, including the Situational judgment test, behavioural styles questionnaire, assessment centers, structured competency-based interviews, and psychometric testing. Special attention is given to the importance of soft skills for the law enforcement system of the Republic of Uzbekistan in the context of reforms aimed at creating a people-oriented, professional, and psychologically resilient model of law enforcement activity. As a practical outcome, the article proposes an original comprehensive methodology for diagnosing professionally significant soft skills of candidates, including 15 diagnostic parameters and a validity scale.

Keywords: soft skills, professional selection, law enforcement agencies, psychodiagnostics, stress resistance, emotional intelligence, communicative competence, situational tests, assessment center.

Introduction

Modern law enforcement activity imposes significantly more complex requirements on personnel than mere knowledge of legislation, possession of specialized skills, and physical readiness for service. Law enforcement officers interact with citizens daily, make decisions under time pressure, and face conflict situations, emotional stress, aggression, uncertainty, and a high degree of personal responsibility. Under such conditions, professional effectiveness is determined not only by the level of hard skills but also by the degree of development of soft skills.

In this article, soft skills are understood as a set of supra-professional psychological, communicative, emotional-volitional, intellectual, and managerial competencies that ensure successful adaptation to service conditions, constructive interaction with the public, stress resilience, teamwork ability, and decision-making in non-standard situations.

The relevance of the topic is обусловлена тем, что недостаточная сформированность soft skills у кандидата может проявляться уже после поступления на службу в виде конфликтности, эмоциональной неустойчивости, коммуникативной грубости, низкой дисциплины, слабой адаптации, профессионального выгорания, неумения работать в коллективе или неспособности действовать в условиях неопределённости. Therefore, diagnosing soft skills should be considered not as an additional HR procedure but as a key element of professional psychological selection.

The purpose of this article is to provide a theoretical justification and develop a comprehensive approach to diagnosing the level of soft skills among candidates applying for law enforcement service.

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Modern international approaches to soft skills assessment

International practice shows that the most effective approach is not the isolated assessment of a single quality but a comprehensive selection model combining psychometric tests, situational tasks, structured interviews, and observation of candidate behavior in simulated professional conditions.

One of the most widely used tools is the Situational judgment test. This method involves presenting candidates with realistic professional scenarios in which they must choose the most appropriate course of action. In police selection, SJT is used to assess decision-making ability, adherence to professional standards, responses to conflict situations, and maturity of judgment. In the United Kingdom, the College of policing uses SJT at the national selection stage alongside the behavioural styles questionnaire.

The behavioural styles questionnaire is aimed at identifying typical behavioral patterns of candidates in work situations. Unlike knowledge tests, it allows assessment of preferred interaction styles, attitudes toward responsibility, self-regulation characteristics, inclination toward cooperation, and readiness to act in accordance with professional values.

Another important method is the assessment center. Within this framework, candidates complete a series of tasks simulating real professional conditions. These may include group discussions, role-playing exercises, written assignments, case analysis, decision-making exercises, stress interviews, and individual presentations. The main advantage of the assessment center is that it allows observation of actual behavior rather than declared competencies.

Structured competency-based interviews are also widely used. Unlike traditional interviews, questions are built around specific behavioral indicators. Candidates are asked to describe real situations from their past experience: how they resolved conflicts, made decisions under pressure, worked in teams, responded to criticism, coped with stress, or demonstrated responsibility. Responses are evaluated according to predefined criteria.

Psychometric testing also plays a significant role. International practice includes personality questionnaires, emotional intelligence assessments, stress resistance scales, cognitive ability tests, and measures of conscientiousness, responsibility, self-control, and risk propensity. However, the modern approach emphasizes that psychometric testing should not be the sole basis for decision-making but should be complemented by situational and behavioral methods.

The importance of soft skills for the law enforcement system of Uzbekistan

For the Republic of Uzbekistan, the issue of diagnosing soft skills among candidates is of particular importance. Current reforms in the law enforcement system are aimed at strengthening interaction with the population, improving professionalism, preventing disciplinary violations, corruption, and conflict situations that may negatively affect the authority of law enforcement agencies.

In this context, communicative culture, psychological resilience, the ability to interact appropriately with citizens, conflict prevention skills, emotional restraint, legal thinking, motivation for service, and readiness to act in non-standard situations become especially important. These qualities are directly related to the level of public trust in law enforcement agencies.

In Uzbekistan, soft skills should be considered not only as universal competencies but also as professionally significant psychological qualities. For example, communicative competence in law enforcement includes not only the ability to communicate but also the ability to conduct dialogue under emotional pressure, explain legal requirements, prevent escalation of conflict, and maintain a professional stance.

Stress resistance also has a specific meaning. For a law enforcement candidate, it implies not only the ability to withstand pressure but also to maintain control over behavior, speech, facial expressions,

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decision-making, and attitude toward citizens in difficult situations. Emotional intelligence is expressed in the ability to understand others' emotional states, predict the development of conflict situations, and choose psychologically appropriate forms of interaction.

Comparative analysis of international and national approaches

International approaches to diagnosing soft skills in law enforcement selection are primarily focused on predictive validity. The key question is how well test results can predict future professional performance. Therefore, significant attention is paid to standardized procedures, statistical validation of methods, and correlation between selection results and subsequent job effectiveness.

In Uzbekistan, the priority is to develop a professional, disciplined, psychologically resilient, and citizen-oriented officer. Therefore, soft skills diagnostics should address not only selection but also early identification of psychological risks, prevention of maladaptation, formation of individual psychological profiles, and determination of directions for further professional development.

While abroad soft skills are often considered within general HR systems, in Uzbekistan's law enforcement system they must be integrated into professional psychological selection, mentoring, certification, training, and psychological support.

Thus, an integrative model combining international assessment tools with national specifics is optimal. Such a model should consider both universal competencies and specific service requirements: discipline, legal awareness, anti-corruption resilience, ability to work with the public, stress resistance, and behavioral control.

Author's comprehensive methodology for diagnosing professionally significant soft skills

Based on the analysis of international practices and the specifics of law enforcement activity in Uzbekistan, an original comprehensive methodology for diagnosing professionally significant soft skills is proposed.

The methodology is based on the idea that soft skills represent an interconnected system of psychological competencies determining readiness for service. It includes 15 diagnostic parameters: analytical thinking, creativity, personal development, time management, managerial abilities, adaptability, teamwork, motivation, intelligence, communicative competence, conflict tendency, leadership potential, systems thinking, stress resistance, and emotional intelligence. Additionally, a validity scale is used to assess the tendency toward socially desirable responses.

The first block evaluates the intellectual-analytical domain, including analytical thinking, intelligence, systems thinking, and creativity. It determines the candidate's ability to analyze information, identify causal relationships, see the broader picture, find non-standard solutions, and maintain logical thinking under uncertainty.

The second block reflects the socio-communicative domain, including communicative competence, emotional intelligence, teamwork, and conflict tendency. This block is particularly important, as professional culture is manifested through interaction with citizens.

The third block characterizes the volitional and adaptive domain, including stress resistance, adaptability, time management, and personal development. These parameters assess the ability to withstand stress, adapt quickly, manage time effectively, and develop professionally.

The fourth block reflects the motivational and managerial domain, including motivation, leadership potential, and managerial abilities. It determines the candidate's readiness to take responsibility, organize others, and act proactively within ethical and disciplinary norms.

The diagnostic process includes several stages: standardized testing, situational tasks, structured interviews, and expert integration of results into an individual profile.

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Situational tasks simulate real law enforcement scenarios, such as dealing with aggressive citizens, facing external pressure, making decisions with limited information, working in teams, and handling ethical dilemmas involving corruption risks.

Results are interpreted at three levels: low, medium, and high. Particular importance is given to stress resistance, emotional intelligence, communicative competence, motivation, conflict tendency, and validity scale results.

The outcome is an individual Soft Skills Profile, reflecting strengths, risk areas, readiness level, and recommendations for development.

Practical significance of the methodology

The proposed methodology allows a transition from formal personality descriptions to a systematic evaluation of professionally significant competencies. It can be applied in law enforcement educational institutions, HR departments, psychological services, and selection centers.

Its implementation can improve selection quality, reduce maladaptation risks, identify high-potential candidates, and enhance psychological support effectiveness.

The methodology can also be adapted for digital platforms, enabling automated profile generation and integrated soft skills assessment.

Conclusion

Diagnosing soft skills among candidates for law enforcement service is a relevant scientific and practical task. Modern law enforcement requires not only specialized knowledge but also developed communicative, emotional, volitional, intellectual, and managerial competencies.

International practice demonstrates the effectiveness of comprehensive approaches combining situational tests, assessment centers, structured interviews, and psychometric testing. For Uzbekistan, stress resistance, communication culture, emotional restraint, motivation, anti-corruption resilience, and constructive interaction with citizens are particularly important.

The proposed methodology enables a systematic evaluation of candidates and can contribute to improving selection quality, strengthening personnel potential, and forming a professional, psychologically resilient, and socially oriented law enforcement workforce.

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