# PSYCHOLOGICAL DIAGNOSTICS OF DESTRUCTIVE MOTIVATION OF PERSONNEL†

**Nona Gyulambaryan,** *International Scientific-Educational Center, National Academy of Sciences, Republic of Armenia*

*Email: nona.gyulambaryan@gmail.com*

*Abstract*

*The social development of a person is emphasized by the formation of social forms of behavior, which are changed in the process of socialization of a person. The main factor in the development of a person's social behavior is activity, in particular, professional activity, during which a person acquires not only professional skills but also learns communicative and socially significant norms and rules of behavior. In the course of professional activity, the ability to respond to the work and behavioral requirements of the employer is gradually formed. Of course, the motivational component of a person's behavior undergoes an inevitable change due to work activity. This article presents the key elements of psychological diagnostics of the destructive motivation of personnel. There are presented statistically significant correlations between variables of motivation for success and to avoid failures.*

*Keywords: destructive motivation, psychological diagnostics, behavior, emotionally saturated attitude, socialization.*

## INTRODUCTION

The motivational component of a person's behaviour in the work environment can be explained with the following premises:

• degree of perception of external or social demands,

• degree of motivation to meet the set requirements (Grubi & Strelchenko, 2019).

These components are essential not only from the point of view of adapting a person to the working environment and accepting social norms and rules of behaviour but also in the context of

facing difficulties during professional activity and finding a way out of crises. Regardless of the definition of the content of difficult situations that appear in the work environment, researchers agree that there are two main ways for a person to carry out professional activities and overcome difficulties:

1. The first is the constructive or constructive option, which is related to increasing a person's adaptive capabilities. In this case, the person acquires a new life experience due to active interaction with the crisis.

2. the second or destructive version of behaviour develops in case of not finding a way out of the crisis, which prolongs the problematic situation. Modern studies often only emphasize the existence of this version of a person's behaviour in a crisis, but no attempts are made to classify its possible manifestations. Thus, the existence of "destructive strategies for overcoming crises" is accepted by the authors, who seem to be plentiful these days. The common feature is the inability of a person to face his problem.

It is a common symptom of destructive motivation in the work environment:

- the crisis, conflict nature of the person-employer relationship,

- commercial goals,

- undesirable working conditions, as well as

- impossibility of improvement of personal, professional, and material status, encouragement.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Modern approaches to the study of motivation show that destructive, destructive manifestations of motivation have in common the realization that selfish, corrupt, or passive conservative emphasis in the motivational field is, in many cases, a way to put an end to unbearable or undesirable external environmental conditions (Chintalapti, 2021; Grabiec & Jędraszczyk-Kałwak, 2017). In the case of the impossibility of specific changes in the social environment, the person perceives such a way out of the behavioural model as the easiest and fastest. The person perceives the deepening of the destructive mechanisms of motivation as a way to change the conditions of work and life. Often, over time, the object of destructive motivation changes, so let us consider the main ones:

1. Addiction to psychoactive substances. One of the main types of motivation for the use of psychoactive substances in the initial phase of addiction is arctic motivation; that is, the use of the

substance is justified by the need to improve one's well-being. In most cases, this type of motivation becomes dominant because the psychoactive substance allows for a quick change of the perception of the current life situation, which does not turn into the need to form constructive behaviour.

2. Overrated hobbies, fanaticism, gambling or pathological gambling, Internet addiction, etc.

Key features include:

• Deep and prolonged concentration,

• biased, emotionally saturated attitude,

• loss of sense of control over the time spent on the hobby.

A person addicted to psychoactive hobbies in the work environment needs psychotherapeutic help because the range of personal and social consequences of these hobbies significantly removes him from ordinary life.

3. Destructive tendencies of work behaviour, which are characterized by the following features:

• negative change in attitude towards work, the hierarchy of values,

• distortion of the social meaning of work,

• concern with self-monitoring of work behaviour.

It is possible to identify standard dependent personality features, such as infantilism, suspiciousness, imitation, inability to predict, etc.

These qualities characterize a person who is not ready to make an active choice in difficult situations and tends to use destructive behavioural models. As a result, the perception of communicative, professional, and other complexities in the work environment changes, replacing reality with the preferred one.

As a rule, all these theories consider the life situation in which a person finds himself, after which the deepening of destructive motivation is a determining factor.

Various factors influence the formation of a person's constructive or destructive motivation in the work environment. Among them are crises, monotonous work, unrealistic expectations, personal qualities, etc. Under the factors listed above, a person's constructive motivation is directed to overcoming difficulties by developing a behavioural model that will allow resolving the crisis. However, along with this, a destructive motivational response is often encountered in practice. It is expressed in the work environment through behavioural patterns that do not correspond to or oppose the goals of the given organization. Motivational changes in a person's social behaviour in

the work environment still require multi-faceted studies. The research on this problem increases the applied value of the research carried out in the person's work activity field.

Such personal characteristics of an individual facilitate the development of a predisposition to destructive motivation as a low level of self-awareness, self-confidence, predominance of avoidant motivation, unformed forecasting function, external locus of control, etc.

In the dynamics of the formation of destructive motivation, two stages are distinguished:

1) stereotyping of expectations,

2) emotional dependence on feelings resulting from using a destructive behavioural model.

At the same time, the deepening dynamics of destructive motivation affect three spheres of a person's activity:

1. cognitive, causing confusion in the communicative field, compulsiveness,

2. emotional, expressed through immorality, self-centeredness, dishonesty,

3. behavioural, manifested through uncontrollability, formal manifestations of control, and realization of personal goals (Basińska, 2021).

Representatives of different theoretical directions indicate that external and internal factors are critical to a person's motivational destructiveness.

From the point of view of psychoanalytic theories, destructiveness results from a person's unsuccessful psychological development. Within the social learning approach, destructiveness is seen as an "acquired" quality, a "trained" phenomenon, the intensity of which is determined by the situational nature (Banfield, 1974). Destructive behaviour occurs because it is rewarded.

Models of "trained destructiveness" are actively used in studies of a person's work activity. According to M. Battles, the behavioural manifestations of such destructiveness are formed by the person's work environment, which imposes the "destructive-avoidance of failures" scenario (Batles, 1996).

Psychologists often turn to role-based socialization theory to explain high levels of destructiveness among women. The social environment tends to encourage male autonomy much more and places stricter restrictions on the outward expression of women's feelings and behaviour. This tendency can also explain the deepening of destructive motivation in work and other social environments.

According to cognitive theories, a person's destructive motivation arises and deepens due to the subjective inability to change the external environment, which is considered the most critical

indicator of the development of destructive relationships. In this sense, behavioural destructiveness as a result of helplessness and loss of control is explained by the models of "self-efficacy," "personal control," "illusion of control," and "trained helplessness."

Thus, various studies have shown the totality of a person with destructive behaviour's cognitive, motivational, emotional, and behavioural characteristics (Bornstein, 1993).

### Cognitive characteristics of the destructive motivation

Let us look at the cognitive characteristics of an employee with destructive behaviour. Cognitive factors in forming destructive motivation uniquely reflect a person's experience. Lack of achievements during work activities and negative experiences of professional advancement can lead to the development of pessimism and the state of "trained helplessness," when, based on failure in one specific situation, the employee concludes that he is entirely unable to solve other problems.

Thus, repeated failures in work activities can deepen the feeling of "trained" helplessness, undermining the motivational field and destructiveness (Garber & Seligman, 1980).

Cognitive characteristics of a person exhibiting destructive motivation include low self-esteem, lack of self-confidence and willpower, self-presentation as helpless and ineffective, and, in extreme cases, an inability to meet the daily demands of life.

An external locus of control over significant events characterizes a person with destructive motivation. That is, the person believes that what is happening to him is the result of external forces and accordingly perceives himself as a passive object of other people's actions and external circumstances.

An external locus of control is often a defence mechanism that avoids responsibility for failures. Given that such helplessness is a subjective characteristic of destructiveness, it is essential to note that it often does not accurately reflect a person's lack of cognitive resources. On the contrary, destructive motivation "feeds" a person's subjective perceptions of reality, deepening distorted perceptions of work performance and achievements.

As a result of "trained helplessness," a person with destructive behaviour sees himself as unable to make and control those decisions. He considers his goals unattainable, stops trying to cope even with problems that can be solved, and is motivated to avoid responsibility: delegating it to his other colleagues.

Delegating responsibility allows one to preserve self-respect and justify one's passivity in case

of failure. J. Sesbron says, "In case of misfortune, the strong look for a way out, the weak - the culprit." In other words, the motivational core of destructive behaviour is to get support and establish appropriate relations with work colleagues.

The scientific literature distinguishes two types of destructive motivation. The first is directly related to the cognitive characteristics of a genuinely helpless person. The second is characterized by an individual who does not feel helpless. However, his destructive behaviour is a conscious "strategy" to manipulate others to achieve his own goals by using the resources of others to solve personal problems.

In both cases, the support-seeking orientation determines the person's passivity, where one's and others' work achievements become interchangeable resources to achieve the given goal (Magun, 1991, p. 57).

### Emotional characteristics of the destructive motivation

A specific emotional background accompanies destructive motivation in the work environment. A person who is not motivated to perform his work by the goals and strategy of the organization acquires self-interested goals, which are accompanied by indifference and pessimism towards the organization's problems. The need for emotional support is either masked or gets hypertrophic signs. In some cases, receiving moral support, love, and sympathy from others may not be related to solving specific problems but be the ultimate goal of behaviour (Heathers, 1955). Developing these behaviours is often seen as a defence mechanism that replaces job achievement.

Another emotional manifestation of destructive motivation is emotional dependence on work colleagues, which gradually takes on the character of fear, regardless of situations requiring decisions and actions, negative evaluation by others, and feelings of loneliness.

Individuals with destructive motivation show less resistance to disappointment and have higher feelings of insecurity in relationships (Liu, 2024).

### Behavioural characteristics of the destructive motivation

The presence of cognitive and emotional components of destructive motivation produces a wide range of destructive behaviours to maximize the opportunity to receive support, from submissive passivity to aggression. These manifestations appear as various expressions of a person's adaptive behaviour with destructive motivation: indifference, indecency, weakening of work

efficiency, obedience to the imposed opinion, desire to avoid conflicts and corruption aspirations.

Relationships based on destructive motivation are characterized, first of all, by the idealization of the self-image. However, aggression is at the core of the behaviour, which can occur if the person's expectations are unmet. The more expectations arise, the greater the risk of disappointment. To some extent, this frustration is always present because there is always a gap between what is desired and reality. Hence, there is an ever-present feeling of anger and the fear of losing the support of colleagues.

Thus, a wide range of socio-psychological research on the problem allows us to characterize the psychological image of a person with destructive motivation and provides multi-content information on the features of interpersonal interactions (Kispál-Vitai, 2016). The research results allow for the prediction of two main directions for developing these relations in the long term. They will either become destructive, contributing to the social rejection of the person, exacerbating the feeling of helplessness, incompetence, and negative attitude towards him, or they will grow into mutual relations, that is, a balanced, adequate exchange of activities and resources. Therefore, developing psychological diagnostics and selecting methodological tools are prioritized in studying the problem (Kotov, 2015).

**METHODS AND METHODOLOGY**

For psychological diagnostics of destructive motivation of personnel, we selected methods for diagnostics of group motivation by I.D. Ladanov, motivation to avoid failures by T. Eles, and motivation for success by T. Eles (Kasyanov, 2006).

The method for diagnostics of group motivation proposed by I. Ladanov consists of 12 factors of diagnostics of group motivation. According to this method, the following factors are offered to the personnel to assess the most prevailing factors in the motivational sphere. The motivational sphere is assessed from 1 to 7 according to the principle of the semantic differential method. The degree of formation of group motivation is characterized according to the prevalence of high assessments. The following factors of the motivational environment are studied:

- Level of group cohesion
- Group members' activity
- Balanced interpersonal relationships in the group
- Absence of conflicts in the group

- High level of group compatibility

- Personal understanding of organizational goals and their acceptance

- Recognition of the authority of the leader

- Respect for the competence of the leader

- Recognition of the leadership qualities of the leader

- Presence of trusting relationships between group members and the leader

- Participation of group members in the decision-making process

- There are conditions for expressing the creative potential of group members

The test for diagnostics of motivation to avoid failures, proposed by T. Eles, allows us to evaluate the level of protection of the personality, motivation to avoid failures, and fear of misfortune. The sum of the points received evaluates the questionnaire: the higher the sum of points, the higher the level of motivation to avoid failures and protection. The level of motivation varies from 2 to over 20 points.

The test for diagnosing motivation to achieve a goal and succeed is also assessed by the sum of the points received from 1 to over 21. The higher the sum of points, the higher the motivation for success. The "Motivation for Success" test should be analyzed with the results of the two other tests.

The study involved employees of various public sector institutions. It was conducted in the Republic of Armenia. The sample size was 110 employees, of which 55 were men and 55 were women aged 35 to 45. All participants had higher education and at least 5 years of work experience. The results of the study are provided below.

**RESULTS**

Based on the data obtained during the study, the following results of group motivation of personnel were revealed.

**Table 1. Frequentist Individual Item Reliability Statistics**

| Cronbach's α | | 0.784 |
|---|---|---|
| **Variables** | **If item dropped Cronbach's α** | **Item-rest correlation** |
| Level of group cohesion | 0.721 | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| The activity of group members | 0.559 | 0.700 |
| Balanced interpersonal relationships in the group | 0.564 | 0.708 |
| Absence of conflicts in the group | 0.720 | 0.774 |
| High level of group compatibility | 0.563 | 0.555 |
| Personal understanding of organizational goals and their acceptance | 0.254 | 0.775 |
| Recognition of the authority of the leader | 0.330 | 0.766 |
| Respect for the competence of the leader | 0.226 | 0.802 |
| Recognition of the leadership qualities of the leader | 0.247 | 0.800 |
| Presence of trusting relationships between group members and the leader | 0.222 | 0.823 |
| Participation of group members in the decision-making process | 0.253 | 0.807 |
| There are conditions for expressing the creative potential of group members | 0.266 | 0.811 |

**Table 2. Correlation characteristics in the personnel, Spearman's rho**

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Level of group cohesion | - | | | | | | | | | | | |
| The activity of group members | 0.701** | - | | | | | | | | | | |
| Balanced interpersonal relationships in the group | 0.722** | 0.744* | - | | | | | | | | | |
| Absence of conflicts in the group | 0.801** | 0.698* | 0.644** | - | | | | | | | | |
| High level of group compatibility | 0.799* | 0.777* | 0.798** | 0.555* | - | | | | | | | |
| Personal understanding of organizational goals and | 0.584 | 0.201 | 0.204 | 0.317 | 0.447** | - | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| their acceptance | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Recognition of the authority of the leader | 0.423 | 0.320 | 0.363 | 0.669** | 0.501*** | 0.888*** | - | | | | | |
| Respect for the competence of the leader | 0.481 | 0.435 | 0.111 | 0.674* | 0.397** | 0.759*** | 0.805*** | - | | | | |
| Recognition of the leadership qualities of the leader | 0.532 | 0.444 | 0.274 | 0.455* | 0.346* | 0.766*** | 0.788*** | 0.799*** | - | | | |
| Presence of trusting relationships between group members and the leader | 0.430* | 0.532** | 0.341* | 0.582* | 0.441* | 0.709** | 0.804*** | 0.768** | 0.723* | - | | |
| Participation of group members in the decision-making process | 0.564* | 0.331** | 0.211* | 0.422* | 0.422** | 0.802*** | 0.774** | 0.698** | 0.632* | 0.554*** | - | |
| There are conditions for expressing the creative potential of group members | 0.450* | 0.330** | 0.410* | 0.501* | 0.387* | 0.722* | 0.654* | 0.702*** | 0.772* | 0.699*** | 0.753*** | - |

*Note.* «*» - $p < .05$, «**» - $p < .01$, «***» - $p < .001$.

Research has shown that people who are moderately focused on success prefer an average level of risk. Those afraid of failure like trim or, conversely, too large a level of risk. The higher a person's motivation for success - to achieve a goal- is, the lower the willingness to take risks. At the same time, motivation for success also affects the hope for success. With a strong motivation for success, hopes for success are usually more modest than with a weak motivation for success. In addition, people who are set up for success and have high hopes for it tend to avoid high risks. Those intensely focused on success and highly willing to take risks are less likely to have accidents than those who are highly willing to take risks but are highly motivated to avoid failures (protection). Conversely, when a person is highly motivated to avoid failure (defence), this hinders the attitude towards success, that is, achieving the goal. Participants in the study who had a high

level of destructive motivation noted a weak connection between the variables of "personal understanding of organizational goals and their acceptance," "Recognition of the authority of the leader," "Respect for the competence of the leader," "Recognition of the leadership qualities of the leader" and "Presence of trusting relationships between group members and the leader."

### DISCUSSION

At the current stage of society's development, new risks and dangers are constantly created, contributing to the growth of destructive motivation in the work environment.

The spread of destructive motivation, both as a consequence and the deterioration of individual public health, represents the current socio-psychological characteristic of the relationship between society and the individual.

The phenomenon of destructiveness manifests itself in forming a self-centred personality and self-interested behaviour, increasing the risk of social behaviour formalism. At the same time, destructive motivation can be primary and secondary in its manifestation. The primary type of destructive motivation occurs when a person enters a work environment with the premeditated and premeditated intent to gain a selfish gain from the work activity. As many studies show, more often. However, the secondary type of destructive motivation is encountered when the destructive motivation is gradually formed and emphasized in the employee during his professional activity.

For this reason, the destructive motivation that appears in the working environment is presented as a destructive reaction of the employee to the working conditions. For example, too strict control over work discipline by the employer can lead to a destructive response in employees: they will tend to maintain the formal aspect of the work activity (not being late for work, not being absent, etc.) rather than ensuring the functionality of the activity. Conversely, the irregular nature or lack of control can lead to another manifestation of a secondary type of destructive motivation: in organizations with weak control systems, where the employee operates with impunity, corruption risks based on the individual's self-centred, self-interested considerations can quickly emerge.

### CONCLUSION AND FINDINGS

A review of theoretical sources and empirical research data showed that a low level of destructive motivation positively correlates with high indicators of the variables "personal understanding of organizational goals and their acceptance," "Recognition of the authority of the leader," "Respect for the competence of the leader," "Recognition of the leadership qualities of the

leader" and "Presence of trusting relationships between group members and the leader." The results of Cronbach's alpha showed that these indicators are decisive in diagnosing destructive motivation. The data obtained allow further study of destructive motivation and the classification of correlating indicators.

## REFERENCES

**Banfield, E. C. (1974).** *The unheavenly city revisited.* Boston, MA: Little, Brown.

**Basińska, B. A. (2021).** Work motivation profiles and work performance in corporate employees: A two-step cluster analysis. *Roczniki Psychologiczne*, *23*(3), 227–245. https://doi.org/10.18290/rpsych20233-3

**Batles, M. M. (1996).** *The many faces of dependency in old age.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

**Bornstein, R. F. (1993).** *The dependent personality.* New York, Guilford Press.

**Chintalapti, N. R. (2021).** Impact of employee motivation on work performance. *Anusandhan – NDIM's Journal of Business and Management Research*, *3*(2), 24–33. https://doi.org/10.56411/anusandhan.2021.v3i2.24-33

**Garber, J., & Seligman, M. E. P. (1980).** *Human helplessness: Theory and applications.* New York, NY: Academic Press.

**Grabiec, O., & Jędraszczyk-Kałwak, J. (2017).** Motivating factors applied in small and medium enterprises. *Zeszyty Naukowe Wyższej Szkoły Humanitas Zarządzanie*, *18*(3), 37–49. https://doi.org/10.5604/01.3001.0010.6384

**Grubi, T., & Strelchenko, A. (2019).** Psychology of university students' motivation. *Fundamental and Applied Research in Practice of Leading Scientific Schools*, *33*(3), 25–29. https://doi.org/10.33531/farplss.2019.3.06

**Heathers, G. (1955).** Acquiring dependence and independence: A theoretical orientation. *Journal*

*of Genetic Psychology*, *87*, 277–291.

**Kasyanov, S. (2006).** *Psikhologicheskie testy* [Psychological tests]. Moscow, Russia: Eksmo.

**Kispál-Vitai, Z. (2016).** Comparative analysis of motivation theories. *International Journal of Engineering and Management Sciences*, *1*(1), 1–13. https://doi.org/10.21791/ijems.2016.1.25

**Kotov, S. V. (2015).** Positive motivation determinants in psychology. *Historical and Social-Educational Ideas*, *6*(6_1), 196. https://doi.org/10.17748/2075-9908-2014-6-6_1-196-199

**Liu, X., & Jia, N. (2024).** How is motivation generated? Exploring the truth about motivation generation from a psychological perspective. *International Journal of Education and Humanities*, *12*(1), 216–219. https://doi.org/10.54097/s3ds1b15

**Magun, V. S. (1991).** The relationship between a person's readiness for self-effort and the help they expect. *Psychological Journal*, 12(6), 57–67.