

DOI <https://doi.org/10.30525/2592-8813-2026-2-51>

MANIFESTATIONS OF PROFESSIONAL DESTRUCTION AND PSYCHO-EMOTIONAL TENSION AMONG POLICE OFFICERS UNDER THE INFLUENCE OF CONTEMPORARY EXTREME FACTORS

Vitaliy Saifutdinov,

*Postgraduate Student at the Department of General and Social Psychology,
Educational and Scientific Institute of Management, Psychology and Security
of Lviv State University of Internal Affairs (Lviv Ukraine)*

ORCID ID: 0009-0002-5807-5278

safik2933@gmail.com

Abstract. The article provides a comprehensive analysis of professional deformation among employees of the National Police of Ukraine as a psychological phenomenon. It is substantiated that the fundamental prerequisite for the effectiveness of law enforcement activities lies in strict adherence to the rule of law and the protection of constitutional human rights and freedoms, which directly correlates with public trust – a dominant indicator of police performance. The author emphasizes that while professional deformation is an objective and often inevitable process inherent in various occupations, the policing profession is particularly susceptible to its onset and destructive progression. This vulnerability stems from specific operational conditions, a demanding range of professional duties, high psychophysical tension, and constant exposure to conflict-ridden environments. The study systematizes existing scholarly approaches to defining professional deformation and identifies its development as a result of a complex interplay between micro-social, macro-social, and individual determinants. It is demonstrated that the manifestations of professional deformation transcend the professional sphere, negatively impacting the officer's personal life and social environment. The article concludes that effective prevention and counteraction of this phenomenon require integrated efforts from law enforcement agencies, the state, and civil society.

Key words: professional deformation phenomenon, professional activity, professionally undesirable traits, police officer, human and civil rights, prevention, countermeasures.

Introduction. The Constitution of Ukraine defines the state as social and law-governed, founded upon the principle of the rule of law. Within this framework, the individual—including their life, health, honor, dignity, inviolability, and security—is recognized as the highest social value. The affirmation and protection of human rights and freedoms constitute the primary duty of the state, directly determining the substance and orientation of its institutional activities (Law of Ukraine No. 254k/96-BP. (1996). The implementation of these principles is largely entrusted to law enforcement agencies. Pursuant to Article 2 of the Law of Ukraine "On the National Police," the core mandates of the agency include ensuring public safety and order, protecting human rights and freedoms, as well as the interests of society and the state, combating crime, and providing assistance to persons in need due to personal, economic, social reasons, or emergencies (Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII (20215).

Society places high demands on police officers, viewing them not merely as highly qualified specialists but as individuals possessed of a profound sense of civic responsibility and high moral and ethical standards. The complexity and accountability of these tasks necessitate rigorous criteria for the individual psychological traits and professional competence of personnel. Enhancing the personal, spiritual, and professional profile of law enforcement officers is a priority for the leadership of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine. This, in turn, stimulates scientific interest in investigating negative attributes of professional conduct, specifically the phenomenon of professional deformation.

The scientific study of professional deformation among police officers is an urgent issue, as there is a critical demand for the development of effective mechanisms for its prevention and mitigation. This

demand holds significant weight in both theoretical and practical dimensions. The professional development (professiogenesis) of police officers, in the context of fulfilling their duties, is directly correlated with the evolution of personality traits that may, under certain conditions, negatively impact professional performance. Professional deformation of police personnel is a complex socio-psychological phenomenon, the analysis of which requires the comprehensive application of modern scientific instruments and interdisciplinary approaches.

The aim of the article is to provide a theoretical substantiation and a comprehensive characterization of the phenomenon of professional deformation among employees of the National Police of Ukraine.

Analysis of Recent Research and Publications. Despite significant scientific and practical interest in this issue – driven primarily by the imperative to enhance the effectiveness of law enforcement activities – the problem of professional deformation still requires systematic investigation. The essence of this phenomenon has been explored in the works of both domestic and international specialists, including: O. Bandurka, V. Barko, I. Holosnichenko, O. Dzhuzha, R. Kaliuzhnyi, Z. Kisil, V. Kovalenko, M. Kostytskyi, I. Klymenko, N. Miloradova, S. Slyvka, D. Shvets, O. Tsilmak, as well as C. Maslach, W. Schaufeli, G. J. Sixma, D. van Dierendonck, among others.

Presentation of the main material. Professional activity is an integral component of an individual's life journey and a significant factor in their development and socialization. At the same time, professional self-realization, alongside positive achievements, can lead to certain negative consequences. One such manifestation is professional deformation—an objectively probable, though not inevitable, «shadow side» of a profession. At a subjective level, it emerges as a consequence of excessive narrow-profile specialization and an ultra-high level of aspirations. Although professional deformation can occur in any field, it is most commonly found among representatives of "person-to-person" professions, such as educators, lawyers, and service workers (D. Shvets (2018)).

Most researchers interpret the phenomenon of professional deformation as a result of an individual's misalignment with generally accepted professional norms. This manifests in the formation of rigid behavioral patterns, the transfer of professional roles into the sphere of extra-service relationships, and the destructive transformation of personality traits under the influence of professional specificities (Kirbyatyev, O. (2019); V. Markovskiy (2020)).

The phenomenon of professional deformation originates from destructive changes in the structure of professional activity and the specialist's behavior at both social and psychological levels. A significant number of researchers link professional deformation with negative transformations in the socio-psychological architectonics of the individual [Z.Kisil & R.-V. Kisil (2020); D. Shvets (2018)]. This position is shared by foreign scholars as well. In particular, L. Ternovska & V. Ternovskiy (1995) view professional deformation as a prolonged, multifaceted process of disruption in the personality's mental structures, which causes numerous functional changes in professional activity M. Velikodna (2013). For his part, D. Green (2009) notes that the etiology of professional deformation lies in the narrowing of ethico-moral perception and the dominance of stereotypical attitudes, leading to a confrontation between the individual and established social norms.

The process of deformation initially develops at the intra-personal level, subsequently manifesting in professional behavior and impacting the immediate social environment. H. Langerock (1915) treats this phenomenon as the result of a long-term influence of specific professional factors, leading to the hyperbolization of the professional role's significance within the general structure of the individual's life activities. The hypertrophied development of certain character traits often causes professional unsuitability, violations of legislative norms, or the commission of immoral acts. Thus, the development of professional deformation exert a destructive influence on the specialist's motivational orientation and value systems.

The perspective of D. Shvets (2024) is well-substantiated, stating that the ultimate degree of professional deformation is professional degradation. It is characterized by immoral behavior, legal offenses, and other manifestations of social maladaptation. Special attention should be given to studying the impact of professional deformation on the communicative sphere of employees' activities [26].

Most domestic scholars lean toward understanding professional deformation as a manifestation of rigid professional adaptation of the personality to environmental requirements. This process becomes an obstacle to the further professional and personal development of the subject (O. Kirbyatyev (2019); T. Garasimov (2012); S. Gryshchenko (2012); O. Kirbyatyev (2019); Z. Kisil & D. Shvets, V. (2022)). Furthermore, deformation can result from professional disappointment, which manifests as excessive stereotyping of activities, a simplified approach to solving service tasks, and the transfer of specific professional behavioral patterns into the extra-service sphere of life (J. Green (2009); V. Medvedev (1999)).

The problem of professional deformation remains extremely acute for law enforcement agencies, whose personnel are constantly under the intensive destructive influence of the environment. This is conditioned by the specific nature of service activities, as well as the psychological and criminological characteristics of the objects of influence—individuals or groups who are often carriers of anti-social attitudes. In scientific literature, such influence is metaphorically compared to «psychological radiation», which, under prolonged exposure, causes personality defects and moral anomalies in law enforcement officers (O. Reva & S. Boyko (2009)).

In alignment with the position of Yu. Aleksandrov (2012), professional deformation should be understood as the result of a discrepancy between the personality and the socio-professional norm. This is manifested in the consolidation of rigid behavioral stereotypes, the transfer of the professional role into the sphere of private relationships, and the destructive transformation of the personality under the influence of specific working conditions (Yu. Aleksandrov (2012)). In turn, A. Kuruch (2013) defines this phenomenon as a negative distortion of the employee's personal qualities and performance results, determined by accumulated professional experience and unfavorable service conditions.

Professional deformation among the personnel of the National Police of Ukraine is a destructive phenomenon that causes significant damage to the functioning of the entire system of security and defense forces, effectively nullifying the professional suitability of specialists who have fallen under its influence. A discussion regarding the determinants of this state continues in scientific circles. In particular, Professor V. Medviediev (1999) views professional deformation as a kind of «price» that a specialist pays for a high level of professional aspirations and excessive involvement in the activity. The researcher notes that this phenomenon is a complex of interrelated changes in individual qualities and the personality as a whole, arising as a result of performing law enforcement functions.

An important thesis concerns the differentiated nature of deformation depending on the specialization of the unit. The most intensive destructive impact has been recorded among criminal investigation officers; a medium degree of intensity is characteristic of the patrol service and investigative units, while a relatively low level is observed in human resources and administrative services (V. Medviediev (1999)).

The key prerequisites for the genesis of professional deformation include: long-term work experience in extreme conditions and a psychological misalignment between an individual's personal qualities and the high demands of professional activity. The permanent influence of negative factors within the service environment causes an increase in internal tension, self-dissatisfaction, discomfort, and insecurity. The prolonged impact of such situations consolidates destructive mental states, which subsequently transform into stable negative personality traits.

Based on the nature of its manifestations, professional deformation can be divided into two forms:

1. *Overt Professional Deformation*: indifference and cruelty in the treatment of offenders, detainees, or suspects; a conviction of one's own permissiveness and the disregard for ethical norms; excessive suspicion and a pronounced accusatory bias; the use of unlawful methods of work based on the

principle that «the end justifies the means»; addictive behavior (specifically alcohol dependence) and the degradation of speech culture (the use of criminal slang).

2. *Covert Professional Deformation*: abuse of power and the prioritization of self-serving motives; immoral behavior in private life and spiritual regression; a distorted understanding of service interests and professional reputation; the concealment of crimes and the pursuit of unlawful benefits; association (entrenchment) with criminal elements.

Significant insights are provided by the research of V. Bodnar (2018), who identifies the determinants contributing to the commission of torts (delicts) by police officers. Dominant among these are: formal-bureaucratic management methods (58.3%); professional burnout and fatigue, which generate indifference toward service (52.3%); the collective's orientation toward «anti-values» (49.6%); and the formation of a «double standard of morality» (35.6%) alongside an atmosphere of «mutual concealment» or *krugovaya poruka* (35.6%). Additionally, a psychologically conflict-prone atmosphere within the unit and a low level of adaptation of individual employees to the collective's ethical norms exert a substantial influence.

Contemporary researchers adhere to a multidisciplinary approach to revealing the essence of professional deformation, viewing it as the result of the interaction between the specifics of professional activity, social roles, and the individual psychological properties of the personality. As noted by I. Khorzhevskiy & V. Tsarapora (2013), professional activity itself serves as the key determinant in the development of personality destructions.

Objective factors related to the quality of the law enforcement system's functioning are of significant importance. L. Makotchenko & V. Shablysty (2020) emphasize that inconsistent legal policy, constant reorganizations, and the misalignment of the system's resources with actual crime rates destabilize the work of police officers, creating a foundation for professional deformation.

The specifics of the legal regulation of police activities also exert a dual influence. On one hand, strict adherence to the law is the foundation of the activity; on the other hand, excessive normativity can stimulate formalism and bureaucratization. O. Kirbiatiev (2019) observes that the desire to act exclusively according to a template, without a deep analysis of the substance of legal norms, leads to the excessive formalization of service.

The issue of professional resilience acquires particular significance under the conditions of martial law. Constant interaction with citizens in need of emergency assistance, combined with the awareness of high responsibility for decisions made, provokes a state of anxiety and emotional tension. N. Dubinchuk *et al.* (2018) reasonably assert that during wartime, the workload and the degree of responsibility increase exponentially, serving as a powerful predictor for the formation of deformational personality traits.

Organizational uncertainty also acts as a potent stressor. V. Markovskiy (2020) points out the risks associated with blurred job descriptions: the lack of a clear algorithm of action places the police officer before a dilemma between professional inactivity and the potential abuse of power.

The consequences of professional deformation are complex and extend to three spheres:

1. *Social sphere*: the formation of a negative image of the police and a decrease in the level of public trust (although the general level of trust in the National Police of Ukraine has recently increased, risks remain pertinent) (Z. Kisil & D. Shvets, V. (2022); Yu. Merkulova (2017)).

2. *Personal sphere*: professional burnout, loss of motivation for development, deterioration of mental health indicators, and general life dissatisfaction (M. Kravtsova & T. Datsyuk (2022)).

3. *Professional sphere*: a decrease in the efficiency of task performance, violations of service discipline and legality, and manifestations of deviant behavior.

The particular danger of deformation in the professional sphere lies in the threat of violating fundamental human rights and freedoms, which nullifies the core mission of law enforcement agencies.

The position of M. Kravtsov & T. Datsiuk (2022), who identify an insufficient level of psychological support as one of the key organizational factors in the genesis of professional deformation, should be supported. The researchers emphasize that the systematic provision of psychological literacy, the implementation of individual counseling, and the integration of rehabilitative and therapeutic work would significantly reduce staff turnover, minimize the number of suicide attempts, and decrease violations of service discipline. Timely diagnosis of deformational signs is a prerequisite for providing effective psychological assistance to personnel.

An analysis of the scientific literature provides grounds to assert that professional deformation is a universal phenomenon inherent to representatives of all types of professions; however, it acquires particular severity within the activities of the National Police of Ukraine. The primary groups of determinants for this process are socio-political, administrative-organizational, spiritual, and economic factors. It is often professional deformation itself that becomes the root cause of the abuse of power and the violation of the constitutional rights of citizens.

We believe that the introduction of a deontological model of law enforcement requires profound conceptual rethinking and regulatory consolidation. To date, the term "professional burnout" and its prevention mechanisms are insufficiently reflected in domestic legislation. It appears expedient to implement international experience (USA, France, Germany), where "Codes of Deontological Conduct for Police" operate at the regulatory level, governing the ethical aspects of service.

Conclusions. The phenomenon of professional deformation in a National Police officer represents a radical transformation of individual attributes within the context of professional activities. The primary determinants arising from the specifics of police work that facilitate professional deformation include: rigorous legal regulation of duties, significant discretionary power over subjects of interaction, professional corporatism, a heightened degree of individual responsibility for outcomes, psychological and physical exhaustion, and the inherent risks and extreme conditions of service.

Professional deformation exerts a negative impact not only on the officer's professional performance but also on their spiritual, cognitive, motivational, and emotional spheres. Ultimately, this phenomenon leads to an increase in violations of service discipline and legality, causes irreparable damage to professional interests, and provokes negative public perceptions of law enforcement. It undermines professional ethics and erodes the public image of the National Police of Ukraine.

Prospects for Further Research. Future research should focus on developing a modernized framework for the prevention of professional deformation among law enforcement officers. This involves synthesizing international deontological standards with innovative psychological support systems to ensure the integrity and mental resilience of personnel, especially under the ongoing pressures of contemporary extreme factors.

References:

1. Aleksandrov, Yu. V. (2012). Problems of professionalization and professional deformation of employees of internal affairs bodies. *Law and Security*, 4(46), 323–328.
2. Bodnar, V. E. (2018). *Crimes in the field of official activity committed by employees of the National Police of Ukraine: theory and practice of countermeasures* [Monograph]. National Academy of Internal Affairs.
3. Dubinchuk, N. V., Saliy, I. Yu., & Boyko-Buzyl, Yu. Yu. (2018). The main factors causing professional deformation of law enforcement officers. *Actual Problems of Rights Protection*, 2, 266–269.
4. Garasimov, T. Z. (2012). *Natural and social determinants of the formation of deviant behavior of a person: philosophical and legal dimension* [Monograph]. Lviv State University of Internal Affairs.
5. Green, J. (2009). The deformation of professional formation: Managerial targets and the undermining of professional judgement. *Ethics and Social Welfare*, 3(1), 115–130. <https://doi.org/10.1080/17496530902810457>

6. Gryshchenko, S. V. (2012). Self-help strategies in overcoming professional deformation in the activities of social pedagogues. *Bulletin of the Chernihiv National Pedagogical University. Series: Pedagogical Sciences*, 96, 53–57.
7. Hryshchenko, S. V. (2012). Self-help strategies in overcoming professional deformation in the activities of social pedagogues. *Bulletin of the Chernihiv National Pedagogical University named after T.G. Shevchenko. Series: Pedagogical sciences*, 96, 53–57.
8. Khorzhevskaya, I. M., & Tsarapora, V. V. (2013). Peculiarities of professional deformation of the personality of military and militiamen. *Collection of Scientific Papers. Psychological Sciences*, 10(91), 312–316.
9. Kirbyatyev, O. (2019). Professional deformation of the personality of a law enforcement officer as a reason for improper performance of duties. *Legal Bulletin*, 4, 204–210.
10. Kisil, Z. R., & Kisil, R.-V. V. (2020). Legal and psychological principles of the study of the professional deformation of employees of the National Police of Ukraine. *University Scientific Notes*, 19(1), 238–252.
11. Kisil, Z. R., & Shvets, D. V. (2022). *Psychology of management: Study guide*. University Book.
12. Constitution of Ukraine. (1996). Law of Ukraine No. 254k/96-BP. <https://zakon.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/254>
13. Kovalchyshina, S. V. (2012). Theoretical and methodological approach to the issue of the phenomenon of professional destruction of law enforcement officers. *Staff Gazetteer*, 1(3), 60–72.
14. Kravtsova, M. O., & Datsyuk, T. K. (2022). Factors causing professional deviations among law enforcement officers. *Actual Problems of Domestic Jurisprudence*, 1, 26–30.
15. Kuruch, A. V. (2013). Ways to overcome the professional deformation of employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. *Honor and Law*, 2(45), 88–92.
16. Langerock, H. (1915). Professionalism: A study in professional deformation. *The American Journal of Sociology*, 21(1), 30–44. (Original work published 1915, note: user provided 2005 as publisher date).
17. Makotchenko, L. M., & Shablystiy, V. V. (2020). *Prevention of abuse of power or authority of law enforcement officers* (V. V. Shablysty, Ed.). Bila K. O. Publisher.
18. Markovskiy, V. Ya. (Ed.). (2020). *Police deontology: Study guide*. LvDUVS.
19. Medvedev, V. S. (1999). *Psychology of professional deformation of employees of internal affairs bodies* [Doctoral dissertation summary, National Academy of Internal Affairs of Ukraine].
20. Medvedev, V. S. (1999). *Problems of professional deformation of the employees of the OBS (theoretical and applied aspect)*. NAVSU.
21. Merkulova, Yu. V. (2017). *Professional and psychological training of employees of the National Police*. Odesa State University of Internal Affairs. http://oduvs.edu.ua/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/lek-1_2017-PPPPNP.pdf
22. About the National Police. (2015). Law of Ukraine No. 580-VIII. <http://zakon3.rada.gov.ua/laws/show/580-19>
23. Pinska, O. S. (2010). Specifics of professional legal awareness and legal culture of employees of internal affairs bodies. *Bulletin of Kharkiv National University of Internal Affairs*, 4(51), 22–28.
24. Reva, O. M., & Boyko, S. V. (2009). Irrationality of group behavior and group deformations of employees in the process of joint work. *Scholarly Notes. "KROK" University of Economics and Law*, 19, 225–235.
25. Sereda, V. V., & Kisil, Z. R. (2016). *Legal and psychological principles of prevention of professional deformation of law enforcement officers* [Monograph]. Lviv State University of Internal Affairs.
26. Shvets, D. V. (2018). Interrelationship of legal awareness and morality in the activity of police officers of Ukraine as a factor in countering professional deformation. *Scientific Bulletin of the Dnipropetrovsk State University of Internal Affairs*, 1, 16–22.
27. Shvets, D. V. (2024). *Professional deformation of law enforcement officers: legal and psychological dimension* [Monograph]. Yurydika Publishing House.

28. Ternovsky, L. N., & Ternovskaya, V. A. (1995). The professional deformation of the personality from the point of view of deontology. *European Neuropsychopharmacology*, 5(3), 363–364. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0924-977X\(95\)00454-B](https://doi.org/10.1016/0924-977X(95)00454-B)
29. Velikodna, M. S. (2013, November 8–9). *Phenomenology of professional personality deformation*. Psychology in Ukraine and Abroad: Materials of the International Science and Practice Conference, Chernihiv.
30. Verna, Zh. P. (2003). *Motivational and meaningful regulation in the professionalization of a psychologist* [Monograph]. VZV "Vezh" VSU named after Lesi Ukrainka.