

Personal Dissonance as a Factor of Destructive Hostility of the Cadets of Military Educational Institutions

Liudmila Herman¹ * [0000-0003-1006-6225], Iryna Khanenko¹ [0000-0002-7570-258X],
 Olesia Khodanovych² [0000-0002-2900-1168]

¹ *National Academy of Security Service of Ukraine, Kyiv, Ukraine*

² *Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, Ukraine*

* 8086692@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Modern psychological research of servicemen covers a wide range of issues, from the analysis of professionally important qualities to the study of negative mental phenomena related to various areas of their service activities. A separate category of servicemen are cadets of military educational institutions, where they receive special education necessary for professional military service as future officers. At the same time, the majority of cadets, according to their age, are adolescents with significant personal transformations, contradictions of role behavior and ideas. This is reflected in the emergence of various personal formations, which should include hostility that may be caused by the dissonance of ideas about their real and expected self-image. Such dissonances not only disrupt the cadet's system of self-attitudes but can hinder the construction of their social roles through the escalation of hostility. Therefore, timely detection of personal dissonance occurrence against the background of discrepancies between their real and ideal self-images becomes a prerequisite for providing effective psychological assistance to cadets, aimed at harmonizing their formation by preventing the destructive hostility development. Based on an empirical study of 286 cadets, it was found that internal dissatisfaction with the existing and desired development level of such characteristics as "suspicion", "dependence", "aggression", "subordination", as well as "altruism" and "friendliness" is the basis for the escalation of destructive hostility. The creation of a preventive program that would directly affect the dissonance according to these characteristics may harmonize the self-attitude of cadets, and thus prevent the hostility formation.

Keywords: *personal dissonance, military cadets, self-image, hostility, individual psychological qualities, characterological features.*

1. INTRODUCTION

The problem of organizing effective psycho-preventive work with the personnel of the armed forces and other military and paramilitary forces of the state always remains relevant. The combat capability and professional growth of servicemen depend on this direction of professional and psychological service support. In addition, early prevention of negative mental phenomena of personnel is a guarantee of saving the lives and health of servicemen, as well as minimizing destructive phenomena, from the violation of the statutory relationship to self-destructive forms of behavior.

A separate category of servicemen, which has always attracted the attention of psychologists, are conscripts

and cadets, who, in addition to difficulties in adapting to the specific conditions of service, also face purely age-specific features of adolescence. These age characteristics must be taken into account when organizing the psychological support of the service, as they are characterized by complex and intense transformations of the personality during the transition from adolescence to adulthood. The crisis phenomena of servicemen that occur during this age period are connected both with the need to adapt to stressful and risk [1-4] conditions of service and combat activities and with the restructuring of their social roles, according to the formed ideas and values. Radical changes in the perception of the world, oneself and oneself in the world, especially in the context of military service, often accompany the emergence of complex psychological

problems. Such problems can hinder professional and psychological formation, socialization, as well as cause various deviations, including those associated with the emergence of various destructive behavioral attitudes.

Thus, the cadets who form the future unit of officers need special attention. After all, the professionalism and personal maturity of officers directly affect the combat effectiveness of their subordinate personnel, and hence the defense capabilities of the state as a whole. In the process of growing up and professional development, cadets undergo natural changes inherent in adolescence. And if the transformation of ideas about themselves and rethinking their social role status can occur relatively harmoniously, the personality formation occurs without crisis violations. But if there are unresolved radical differences between real and ideal self-images, the risk of intrapersonal conflicts, and, consequently, the emergence of personal dissonances exacerbates.

Such dissonances frustrate the cadet's personality and can provoke the activation of unproductive defense mechanisms, which can transform into hostility and destructive aggression. Thus, to effectively provide psychological assistance to servicemen in general, and cadets, in particular, it is necessary to understand the factors that may affect the occurrence of negative phenomena and destructive attitudes such as hostility.

Therefore, *the aim of the study* is to analyze the personal dissonance of cadets as a factor of destructive hostility occurrence.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

After Festinger L. [5] began to study the phenomenon of dissonance in the context of intrapersonal conflicts, many researchers have studied this phenomenon from different angles. Analyzing the main approaches, the work of Cooper J. [6], who considered the relationship of cognitive dissonance with socio-psychological phenomena, attracts attention. In the context of our study of personal dissonances sources, this can also be interpreted from the fact that the self-images of the cadet are simultaneously influenced by the requirements of the military profession and social images of adolescence, which are retransmitted by civilian peers. Considering the features of the cadets' youth, our attention is drawn to the work of Maziar O. V. [7], who stressed the importance of the ability to update the behavioral patterns, knowledge, skills and abilities acquired in adulthood in their lives. A similar view is shared by Hagege J. and his colleagues [8], when, based on research, it was proved that the lack of ability to reconcile one's own images in different social spheres can be a source of personal dissonance. Therefore, it is important not only to master the cadet's future military profession but also the ability to restructure themselves and their ideas about themselves. This may be the source of dissonance, when the assimilation of new statuses and

roles inherent in military activities, and the relevant requirements for psychological qualities and character traits, leads to a contradiction of cadet ideas, which have not yet been rebuilt due to lack of life and professional experience.

Transformations of personal constructs in the process of correlation of real and expected self-images were considered by Naccache L., El Karoui I. and other scientists [9], who studied personal dissonances through the prism of human ability to a subjective correlation of various, including contradictory, ideas and images in the structure of their own "self". It can be concluded that the harmony or disharmony of this correlation of one's self-images is directly related to the adaptive potential of the individual, which becomes quite acute in the process of mastering the cadet military profession and interiorization of relevant status-role images inherent in this way of life. At the same time, according to Harmon-Jones E. [10], adaptability defects make it impossible for a person to overcome the existing personal dissonance, which is a negative reinforcement that further leads to distortions of worldview, self-acceptance, and, consequently, deformation of behavioral patterns. As noted by Stone J. [11], it is the reflexive potential of the individual that plays a leading role in this process, because it determines the formation of adequate self-esteem, according to internal and external requirements and standards. Otherwise, the reflection defects exacerbate the inconsistent divergence of self-perceptions and, as Klein J, McColl G. [12] pointed out, cause exacerbation of cognitive distortions of self-images against the background of the inclusion of unproductive psychological self-defense mechanisms. In addition, the inability to reconcile one's real and ideal self-images determines susceptibility to stress, and, as noted by Davis K. L., Panksepp J. and Normansell L. [13], acquiring a negative affective color, increases the risk of destructive psychological phenomena. Thus, it can be stated that more adaptive cadets are easier to adapt to new requirements and the corresponding transformations of the self-image in the status of a serviceman and an officer, turning them into appropriate new formations of their personal constructs. And less adaptive cadets face difficulties in adaptation, resulting in personal dissonances, intrapersonal conflicts and other negative phenomena, against which there may be various maladaptive formations, which can include destructive hostility.

If to consider hostility in this context, it can be defined as an acquired internal attitude to a biased negative assessment of life situations, which, in turn, determines the pre-readiness to react aggressively at the level of behavioral patterns. And if aggression itself and a certain level of optimal aggression can be useful for members of paramilitary professions, then hostility is a destructive mental entity that negatively affects the social life of a human. In particular, the biosocial-cognitive

General Aggression Model (GAM) [14], designed to take into account both short-term and long-term dynamic effects with a wide range of aggression variables, explains hostile and aggressive behavior in the context of personality disorders and corresponding distortions of human cognitive perceptions. And, as noted by Warburton W. and Anderson C. [15], at the integrative level, this theory combines previous psychological models of aggression and hostility into a single framework at the interdisciplinary level. In turn, taking into account the coercion theory [16], hostility and aggression should not be interpreted as a purely instinctive motivational formation, because these phenomena arise due to the deprivation of basic needs. Considering the personality formation, such deprivation should be understood not only as the frustration of basic biological needs but also as blocking social ones, which directly include the possibility or impossibility of building social relationships by a person based on actualization of self-images and appropriate status-role images. Turning to the works of representatives of the ethical and humanistic approach [17], it is worth mentioning that they consider aggression and hostility as a form of unproductive psychological protection in response to the threat to the integrity of personal constructs. Thus, returning to our research topic, it can be stated that when there are complications of self-actualization of the individual due to the dissonance of real and ideal self-images, there is a violation of human social activity, resulting in dissatisfaction, which can manifest itself in the escalation of compensatory hostility.

Of course, these scientific developments do not exhaust all the variety of modern approaches to the study of personal dissonances nature but allow us to determine the vector of our empirical study of this phenomenon in the context of unproductive hostility of servicemen. Taking into account the abovementioned, when studying the psychological characteristics of the cadets' personal dissonances, it is necessary to explore the relationship of ideas about real and ideal self-images, which determine, on the one hand, strategies of interpersonal relationships, and on the other hand – development features of negative phenomena such as hostility.

3. METHODOLOGY

To achieve the aim of the study, we have selected relevant psychodiagnostic tools, which were used to study the manifestations of personal dissonance that arises from the discrepancy of ideas about one's real and ideal self-image, and hostility in the personality of the serviceman.

1) Method of the Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality by Leary T. [18]. This technique is designed to study the ideas of the individual about real and ideal "self", and contains the following scales aimed at diagnosis: 1) authoritarianism; 2) selfishness;

3) aggression; 4) suspicion; 5) subordination; 6) dependency; 7) friendliness; 8) altruism. The discrepancy between the real and the ideal self-image for each of the parameters allows determining the level of personal dissonance manifestation.

2) Buss-Durkee Hostility Inventory (BDHI) [19]. Although this method was developed long ago, according to studies by Vassar M. and Hale W [20] in 2009, it is confirmed as an effective tool for determining the integrative rate of hostility and aggression based on measuring scales: 1) physical aggression, 2) covert aggression, 3) irritability, 4) negativism, 5) resentment, 6) suspicion, 7) verbal aggression, 8) guilt. According to the indicators of these basic scales, the hostility index is calculated as the average score of suspicion and irritability indicators.

The empirical basis of the study consisted of 286 20-25-year-old cadets of the 3rd-4th courses of the Military Institute of Taras Shevchenko National University of Kyiv, because 1st-year cadets have not fully experienced the peculiarities of their professional activities, being at the initial stage of adaptation to training and service. Senior students are already gradually immersed in military activities, so the processes of their professional adaptation are at the stage of completion, and, accordingly, the readiness to perform combat missions is higher. The study was conducted in 2019-2021.

Based on the tasks of the study, we conducted a mathematical and statistical analysis of the main correlations of indicators of the level of personal dissonance of the cadets' real and ideal self-images by the method of Leary T. and indicators of hostility index by the method of BDHI. In the course of processing, the existing relationships were determined by calculating Spearman's rank correlation coefficient. This is due to the fact that the metrics obtained are not subject to the law of normal distribution. It should be noted that concerning the sample size ($n=286$), the statistical value of r_s is not less than 0.113 with $p \leq 0.05$, the high value of r_s is not less than 0.149 with $p \leq 0.01$, and the maximum value of r_s is 0.189 with $p \leq 0.001$.

First of all, it should be noted that the average index of the cadets' hostility reaches 73.56 points according to the BDHI method, which, although not critical, but still significantly exceeds the normative values. Thus, it can be argued that the cadets are already characterized by a certain formation of a negative attitude of hostility.

Let's begin the analysis with the average values of dissonance manifestation as a result of the discrepancy between the real and ideal self-images of the cadets according to the main parameters studied by the method of T. Leary (Table 1).

Table 1. The average values of the dissonance manifestations due to the discrepancy between real and ideal self-images according to the method of T. Leary

	Real self-image	Ideal self-image	Dissonance
Authoritarianism	9.77	12.51	2.74
Selfishness	8.38	9.90	1.52
Friendliness	8,40	7.60	0.80
Altruism	9.40	7.85	1.55
Aggression	8.23	11.09	2.86
Dependency	9.85	7.03	2.82
Suspicion	7.98	11.35	3.37
Subordination	8.95	5.87	3.08

As can be seen from the table, the most pronounced dissonance is observed in the manifestation of suspicion and distrust. Training in a regime military educational institution, as well as increased responsibility when working with official information, leaves an imprint on a certain aggravation of suspicion. At the same time, the cadet wants to get rid of such an exhaustible phenomenon, but strict disciplinary statutory requirements make it difficult to relieve stress. In addition, military personnel often have dissonance based on their high level of subordination. Such compulsion to obey orders in some way levels their opinion, disagreement with something, the desire to show their individuality, which leads to contradictions in their ideas about the expediency or appropriateness of such total subordination. Against this background, it becomes impossible to satisfy the desire to show assertiveness in defending their interests and personal boundaries, which is reflected in the exacerbation of dissonance in the manifestation of aggression. This causes even more discomfort and intensification of negative feelings caused by such inconsistencies. Accordingly, the dissonance level in terms of dependence is also a consequence of the inclusion of cadets in a rigid subordinate relationship. The specificity of professional and educational activities is determined by the constant readiness to strictly comply with disciplinary and statutory requirements, as well as internal regulations, which can sometimes conflict with the youth's desire to assert their authenticity and independence. All this leads to a much higher level of authoritarianism than experienced by people who are not involved in this field of activity, because, on the one hand, authoritarianism is formed in cadets as future officers, and on the other – it is a compensatory mechanism for defending their independence, which is a characteristic desire to youthful emancipation. Such dissonances, unfolding against the

background of service in the military structure, are often manifested in exacerbations of aggression and hostility. And if the appropriate level of aggression can be a professionally important quality of a serviceman, then compensatory hostility can often be a sign of the risk of personality deformation due to exacerbation of personal dissonance.

Also, a certain manifestation of dissonance is observed in such characteristics as “altruism” (1.55), “selfishness” (1.52) and “friendliness” (0.80). This means that cadets would like to be more selfish and less altruistic. A constant presence in the military environment leads to a decrease in altruism level, as its high level is often an obstacle to adaptation to this type of activity and, in particular, to the appropriate environment, whose traditions are associated with harsh and rather violent behavior. There is a frequent occurrence of situations in which it is necessary to think, first of all, about oneself, which leads to a certain increase in selfishness and a decrease in the level of altruism. Changes in lifestyles after immersion in military activities lead to certain changes in personality. Naturally, such processes cause an increase in the level of dissonance, especially in adolescence, when the cadets involuntarily compare themselves with civilian peers. As a result, as Laughey W. F. with co-authors [21] points out, there is a so-called empathic dissonance, which disrupts the process of adequate socialization and building productive relationships with others.

Analyzing the correlation of the hostility index with the indicators of dissonance in the abovementioned characteristics, there is a relationship between the internal disharmony of the cadet's personality and its hostility (Table 2). Correlations are ranked downward from more significant to less significant.

Table 2. Correlations of the hostility index with manifestations of dissonances between real and ideal self-images

Dissonances between real and ideal self-images	Hostility index
Suspicion	0.1466
Dependency	0.1275
Altruism	0.1261
Aggression	0.1218
Friendliness	0.1189
Subordination	0.1131
Selfishness	0.0749
Authoritarianism	0.0215

The first thing that becomes apparent from the correlations between hostility and levels of dissonance in the main personal areas of cadets' perceptions of their real and ideal self-images is the solid positive values of correlations. In other words, dissonance growth is interrelated with hostility growth. Thus, the inconsistency of ideas about the real self with those expectations that correspond to the ideal self-image leads to increased dissatisfaction. As a result, hostility appears. In this case, it is a way to channel internal tension and dissatisfaction to the outside. This means that it is necessary to work on these parameters to prevent destructive hostility. If the cadets in military educational institutions, according to certain parameters, have harmonized ideas about real and ideal themselves, the risk of hostility can be minimized.

The positive correlation of dissonance by the criterion of "suspicion" and "hostility index" ($r_s = 0.1466$, $p \leq 0.05$) indicates that anxiety, timidity, tension, neuropsychiatric instability, which are the causes of susceptibility to suspicion, become factors influencing the emergence of acute hostility to others. At the same time, this leads to nonconformism and attempts to reduce one's dependence.

The presence of significant correlations of the "hostility index" with the level of dissonance in terms of "dependence" ($r_s = 0.1275$, $p \leq 0.05$) and "subordination" ($r_s = 0.1131$, $p \leq 0.05$) correspond to each other and confirms the existence of internal conflict on this basis. This, in turn, is accompanied by a decrease in self-confidence, self-esteem, etc. All this causes an increase in aggression, which was confirmed in the correlation of the "hostility index" with the dissonance according to "aggression" ($r_s = 0.1218$, $p \leq 0.05$). It can take the form of direct or indirect compensatory aggression and be a certain protective reaction of the individual to internal conflict. Since in the presence of dissonance, there is an urgent need to get rid of it, and for the cadet, it is not possible in terms of service restrictions, aggression becomes one of the manifestations of a protective reaction. As a result, there is an aggravation of hostility to others.

The positive correlation of the "hostility index" with dissonances in terms of "friendliness" ($r_s = 0.1189$, $p \leq 0.05$) and "altruism" ($r_s = 0.1261$, $p \leq 0.05$) indicates dissatisfaction with the needs of cadets in social communications. Distancing oneself from free social interactions leads to hostility increase. At the same time, social and, in particular, friendly ties can help to reduce internal tensions and eliminate alienation, and thus the manifestation of hostile reactions towards others. Conversely, the risk of losing such connections can provoke feelings of insecurity and, as a result, the avoidance of friendship as a means of self-defense. Eliminating dissonance on the basis of friendship and working with this characteristic of the individual will

provide a resource for cadets to overcome those obstacles that cause the risk of increasing hostility.

The results of the correlation analysis show that cadets' internal dissatisfaction with their current and future levels of manifestation in such characteristics as "suspicion", "dependence", "aggression", "subordination", as well as "altruism" and "friendliness" is the basis of the risk of increasing destructive hostility. Provided that a preventive program is created that would directly affect the harmonization of ideal and real self-images, the risk of forming a hostile attitude in the future can be avoided.

Based on the obtained results, it can be concluded that with the aggravation of self-images disharmony in cadets of military educational institutions, their hostility, either as a protective mechanism or as a compensatory anticipatory reaction, will increase. Taking into account that this tendency is observed even in the initial stages of military service in non-combat conditions, it is possible to predict the risk of increasing hostility at times when exposed to even more stressful conditions, and in the case of their participation in military activities. However, if appropriate preventive measures with cadets are taken in advance during their training, such negative consequences can be prevented in the future.

4. CONCLUSIONS

Based on a comparative analysis of the profiles of ideal and real self-images of cadets, it was found that the greatest discrepancy between the self-images is observed in terms of suspicion, subordination, aggression, authoritarianism and dependence. It is worth noting that the correlation analysis also showed the largest number of significant correlations between hostility and dissonance in these areas of suspicion, dependence, aggression and subordination. This is where a significant source of dissonance can be concentrated because these qualities cause the greatest self-dissatisfaction among cadets. Less pronounced are the differences between the real and the desired self-image according to the manifestation of altruism, selfishness and friendliness, which indicates moderate satisfaction of cadets with the current level of these qualities manifestation, and therefore, they contain less risk of destructive hostility occurrence.

Correlation analysis confirmed that the emergence of cadets' personal dissonances in different areas are interrelated and also have a negative impact on the emergence of personal hostility as a destructive quality. Therefore, when organizing psychological assistance in the course of professional and psychological support of service, these factors need priority attention in the implementation of psychoprophylaxis and psychological correction of personal dissonances of servicemen, especially during their professional development at a young age.

REFERENCES

- [1] Mohammad D. AlJohani and Rizwan Qureshi (2019), "Proposed Risk Management Model to Handle Changing Requirements", *IJEME*, vol. 9, no. 5, pp. 18-25. DOI: 10.5815/ijeme.2019.05.03
- [2] I Gede Ary Suta Sanjaya, Gusti Made Arya Sasmita and Dewa Made Sri Arsa (2020), "Information Technology Risk Management Using ISO 31000 Based on ISSAF Framework Penetration Testing (Case Study: Election Commission of X City)", *IJCNIS*, vol. 12, no. 4, pp. 30-40. DOI: 10.5815/ijcnis.2020.04.03
- [3] Korystin, Oleksandr and Svyrydiuk, Nataliia (2020), "Methodological principles of risk assessment in law enforcement activity", *Nauka i Pravookhorona*, vol. 3 (49), pp. 191-198, DOI: 10.36486/np.2020.3(49).19
- [4] Korystin, Oleksandr and Svyrydiuk, Nataliia (2021), "Activities of Illegal Weapons Criminal Component of Hybrid Threats", Proceedings of the International Conference on Economics, Law and Education Research (ELER 2021), Series: Advances in Economics, Business and Management Research, vol.170, 22 March, pp. 86-91, DOI: 10.2991/aebmr.k.210320.016
- [5] Festinger, L. (1962), "Cognitive dissonance", *Sci Am. Oct*, vol. 207, pp. 93-102. DOI: 10.1038/scientificamerican1062-93
- [6] Cooper, J. (2019), "Cognitive Dissonance: Where We've Been and Where We're Going", *International Review of Social Psychology*, vol. 32 (1). DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5334/irsp.277>
- [7] Maziar, O.V. (2020), Osobystisnyi dysonans: systemnyi analiz: monohrafiia [*Personal dissonance: system analysis: monograph*], Vydavets O. O. Yevenok, Zhytomyr, Ukraina.
- [8] Hagège, J. Chammat, M. Tandetnik, C. and Naccache, L. (2018), "Suggestion of self-(in)coherence modulates cognitive dissonance", *PLoS One*, Aug, 30, vol. 13 (8), e0202204. DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0202204
- [9] Naccache, L. Karoui, I. Salti, M. Chammat, M. Maillet, M. and Allali, S. (2015), "Comment notre cohérence subjective se construit-elle? Le modèle de la dissonance cognitive" [How our subjective coherence is built? The model of cognitive dissonance], *Bulletin de l'Académie Nationale de Médecine*, Feb-Mar, vol. 199 (2-3). DOI: 10.1016/S0001-4079(19)30968-9
- [10] Harmon-Jones, E. and Harmon-Jones, C. (2020), "Cognitive dissonance processes serve an action-oriented adaptive function", *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, Apr, 15, vol. 43, e38. DOI: 10.1017/S0140525X19002176
- [11] Stone, J. (2003), "Self-consistency for low self-esteem in dissonance processes: the role of self-standards", *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, Jul, vol. 29 (7), pp. 846-858. DOI: 10.1177/0146167203029007004
- [12] Klein, J. and McColl, G. (2019), "Cognitive dissonance: how self-protective distortions can undermine clinical judgement", *Medical Education*, Dec, vol. 53 (12), pp. 1178-1186. DOI: 10.1111/medu.13938
- [13] Davis, K.L. Panksepp, J. and Normansell, L. (2014), "The affective neuroscience personality scales: Normative data and implications", *Neuropsychanalysis*, vol. 5 (1), pp. 57-69. DOI: 10.1080/15294145.2003.10773410
- [14] Anderson, C.A. and Bushman, B.J. (2002), "Human aggression", *Annual Review of Psychology*, vol. 53, pp. 27-51.
- [15] Warburton, W. and Anderson, C. (2015), "Aggression, Social Psychology of", *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences*. DOI: 10.1016/B978-0-08-097086-8.24002-6
- [16] Jolliffe, D. and Farrington, D.P. (2018), "Personality and Other Individual Influences on Offending", *The Oxford Handbook of Developmental and Life-Course Criminology*. DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780190201371.013.17
- [17] Jones, S.E. Miller, J.D. and Lynam, D.R. (2011), "Personality, antisocial behavior, and aggression: A meta-analytic review", *Journal of Criminal Justice*, vol. 39 (4), pp. 329-337. DOI: 10.1016/J.JCRIMJUS.2011.03.004
- [18] Leary, T. (2020), *Interpersonal Diagnosis of Personality: A Functional Theory and Methodology for Personality Evaluation*, Resource Publications, Previously published by John Wiley & Sons, 1957.
- [19] Buss, A.H. and Durkee, A. (1957), "An inventory for assessing different kinds of hostility", *Journal of Consulting Psychology*, vol. 21(4), pp. 343-349. DOI: 10.1037/h0046900
- [20] Vassar, M. and Hale, W. (2009), "Reliability reporting across studies using the Buss Durkee Hostility Inventory", *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, Jan, vol. 24 (1), pp. 20-37. DOI: 10.1177/0886260508314931
- [21] Laughey, W.F. Brown, M.E.L. Palmer, E.G. and Finn, G.M. (2021), "When I say empathic dissonance", *Medical Education*, Apr, vol. 55 (4), pp. 428-429. DOI: 10.1111/medu.14441