

A Sociological Analysis of the Destructive Motivation of Public Servants: Causes and Avoidance

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Abstract: The article deals with a study of the destructive motivation of public servants on the example of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). The study was conducted from 2015 to 2018. The purpose of study was to determine what factors are demotivating for civil servants. The research method was the questionnaire method based on a stratified quota sample. It has been proven that this type of motivation in governmental bodies is primarily caused by the employees' disappointment in expectations. Public service is attractive mainly due to the stability of employment and the high social status of an official. However, public servants have to deal with a lack of real power, a high level of stress, and work intensity. Also, the respondents consider their income as inadequate to their work and social status. As a result, employees tend to minimize their labor costs, and destructive motivation appears. The practice of personnel management applies several measures to eliminate this phenomenon, but not all of them can be implemented for the public service. The authors regard the following means as the most effective ones, namely: the improvement of labor organization, the automatization of routine operations, personal responsibility increase, and the development of decision-making discretion.

Keywords: Motivation, demotivation, destructive motivation, deviation, anomie, public service.

INTRODUCTION

History shows that motivated employees, including managers, and a shared ambition to do conscientious and proactive work are key factors in the success or failure of any organization. On this topic, scientists and practitioners have widely studied constructive motivation, which is a way to increase the internal readiness of personnel to efficiently fulfill their duties.

However, the phenomenon of destructive motivation is insufficiently understood, despite its capacity to impede an organization's goals, leading to some negative phenomena, such as protectionism, nepotism, resignations, sabotage, and even economic crimes, namely corruption, theft, and abuse of power. In addition to the direct damage that can be done to an organization, destructive motivation can also decrease employee satisfaction, provoke conflicts, and create tension between employees and employers.

These phenomena are significantly important for public service, which is the main subject of modern public administration research. The features of public

service institutions determine how officials are managed and highlight the problem of providing value-oriented motivation.

Besides, the destructive motivation of officials can affect an entire society, violating interaction ethics between government and citizens, reducing trust in governmental bodies, and destabilizing society. Furthermore, the negative consequences of destructive motivation are manifested all over the world. In particular, destructive motivation has greatly affected commercial and governmental organizations in modern Russia.

Thus, the relevance of the present study is determined by a negative impact of destructive motivation on the activity of governmental authorities, the insufficient scientific and theoretical research of the causes and consequences of the reproduction of this social and managerial phenomenon, as well as the absence of systemic recommendations on destructive motivation reduction in the scientific literature. The aims of this study are the following:

- To assess motivation levels of the public servants in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia);
- To identify factors that demotivate public servants in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia); and

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- To determine the stimuli and management techniques that can most effectively eliminate demotivation in the public service system.

LITERATURE REVIEW

In scientific literature, destructive motivation is discussed as a type of labor motivation that contrasts with constructive motivation, the implementation of which allows an organization to achieve its goals. In the English-language literature, destructive motivation is analyzed concerning management techniques with negative effects (Vogel & Mitchell, 2017; Vogel *et al.*, 2016; Hommelhaft, 2017; Pink, 2013), workers' opportunistic behaviors (Auriol & Brilon, 2018; Ma, 2016; Neuberger, 2015; Dhar, 2012; Brown *et al.*, 2009; Blickle *et al.*, 2006), and destructive processes in labor collectives due to socio-economic factors (Faullant & Dolfus, 2017; Indradevi, 2016).

For the Russian scientific literature, analyses of destructive motivation are relatively new and limited. Prior publications have focused on identifying the factors that lead to this type of labor motivation among employees. These factors include unnecessarily strict labor regulations and organizational behaviors, personal problems (family relations, everyday difficulties), and personal qualities that affect the labor (laziness, lack of self-discipline, irresponsibility, lack of soft skills) (Snisarenko, 2017). These studies have shown that destructive motivation is detrimental to efficiency and effectiveness, which are necessary for the organization's goal achievement (Dudueva *et al.*, 2016; Dudina, 2017; Rubtcova & Mart'yanova, 2016; Kharitonova, 2013; Belkin, 2009). Also, many researchers have analyzed the influence of destructive motivation types on employees' proficiency (Brazevich & Misyukevich, 2016; Pugachev, 2014; Khaliullina, 2010; Ivanova, 2013; Kuznetsova, 2012).

In response to these analyses of destructive motivation, some researchers have introduced motivation models that encourage the self-development and labor potential of employees and organizations (Snisarenko, 2017; Simonenko, 2011; Mikheeva, 2005). These models also incorporate destructive motivation, which can impact the labor process of any category of workers.

In the context of public service, destructive motivation is the subject of numerous studies (Dankova, 2017; Vasilieva & Rubtcova, 2017; Rubtcova & Vasilieva, 2015; Zlokazov, 2014; Osintseva, 2013). Officials' motivation levels are

determined by the social significance of their professional functions performed within the framework of the institution.

In the previous article, the authors turned to the consideration of destructive motivation of the personnel of commercial organizations and in this material, the authors worked out the methodology of the present study (Borisov, 2018).

An important component of destructive motivation studies is the search for the primary cause of this phenomenon. In previous analyses of the conditions, causes, social characteristics, and structure of destructive motivation, authors have focused on discussing the presence of destructive motivation and the necessity of eliminating it. However, the social technologies that could eliminate it have not been practically analyzed.

The novelty of the present research is determined not only with stating and updating the fact of destructive motivation presence in the regional public service system, but also with the attempt to identify managerial techniques that can contribute to the elimination of demotivation. Moreover, the authors assess the attitude of the employees, who are the objects of such techniques, to the prospects for the implementation of the identified practices.

METHODOLOGY

The results of the study of public servant motivation in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia), which was carried out in three stages in 2015, 2017, and 2018 are introduced in this report. The study was conducted using a questionnaire. A widespread structural reorganization was performed in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 2016, which was followed by a reformation of the functionality of many Republican executive bodies.

The sample consisted of stratified quota data with a confidence interval of 5.55%. The confidence level was set at 95%. The sample involved 274 respondents in 2015, 245 in 2017, and 130 in 2018. The sample quota was formed following statistical data provided by the Department for Personnel Policy, Public and Municipal Services of the Administration of the Head of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) and the Government of the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia).

The conceptual framework of this study was based on the sociological institutional approach according to

which social practices are regarded as specialized mechanisms of institutional coordination. The authors define the social institutions as the norms of human behavior that have been historically entrenched in society and which regulate social life using the behavioral constraints as approved by society. The creation of an institution is a process of individual actors, which subsequently becomes institutionalized through the creation of routine social practices. Consequently, the new social roles are then internalized by individuals and integrated into the value system of an individual. In the context of the present study, the personalities of public servants are indicated by their value systems.

Public servants' motivation was identified through the following questions:

- "What, in your opinion, attracts people applying for a vacancy in governmental authorities?";
- "Are you going to continue working in executive bodies?"; and
- "If you are not going to, why?"

The answer to the first question determined the primary motivation of public servants. The second question determined the proportion of the officials who were dissatisfied with their work, i.e., having destructive motivation. The third question allowed for identifying the main factors that determined destructive motivation. The screening question concerned the proposals for the public servants' motivation. In this context, the declared motivation was revealed, basing on expectations that determined the public servants' satisfaction from work.

The application of questionnaires allowed for obtaining the most standardized and generalized

results. In the future, the developed tools set can be used to conduct comparative studies in other regions of the Russian Federation and abroad, which will provide objective and verifiable data.

The research hypotheses were as follows:

1. The main motives that attract citizens to work in governmental authorities are additional guarantees and benefits, as well as the high social status of officials.
2. Destructive motivation in the public service system is caused by the disappointment in the opportunity to realize expectations.
3. Basically, material incentives are introduced as the main tools to increase public servants' motivation.

RESULTS

Answering the question about the reasons that determined the attractiveness of public service as a place to work, the majority of respondents chose the options "Employment Stability" and "Prospects for Career Progression" as the main factors in 2015 and 2017. "High social status" was the priority for the respondents in 2018 (Table 1).

It is possible to identify the uniformity in determining the most attractive motives, i.e., the officials of all age categories indicated the same priorities in 2015 and 2017. However, in 2018, for young officials under the age of 30, the motives of stability and high income had the same priority, while for older officials high social status was of the highest priority.

The attractiveness of the public service as a place to work remained high for the entire period of the study,

Table 1: Distribution of Answers to the Question about the Motives of the Public Service Attractiveness, % (it is Possible to Choose 3 Options)

Motives	2015	2017	2018
High income	29.7	27.8	13.1
Social status	43.1	33.0	35.4
The ability to influence the resolution of socially important issues	15.9	15.5	25.4
Supplementary pension	19.9	16.5	9.2
Benefits and guarantees	29.3	23.7	6.9
Employment stability	60.9	61.9	20.8
Prospects for career progression	56.9	57.7	24.6
Other	1.1	1.0	1.5

although it showed a steady reducing trend. Thus, more than 90% of the respondents admitted their readiness to continue work in the executive bodies in 2015. However, this number reduced to 77.7% in 2018 (Figure 1).

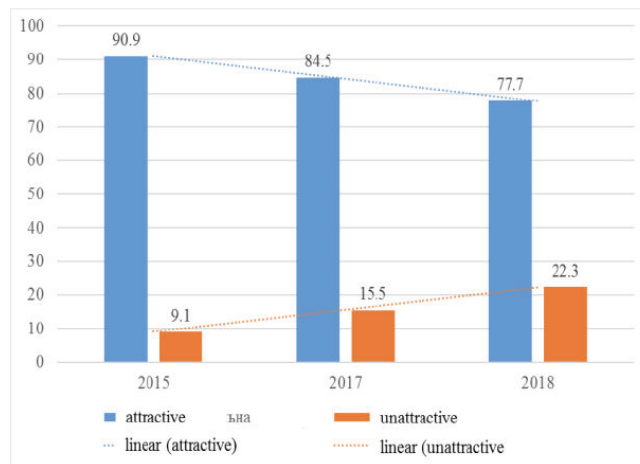


Figure 1: Distribution of answers to the question about the attractiveness of the public service as a place to work, %.

A widespread structural reorganization was performed in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) in 2016, which influenced almost all governmental authorities and invariably caused the leveling of the basic attractive motive, i.e., the stability of employment. Therefore, it can be stated that uncertainty growth reduced the public servants' motivation.

In this context, it is significantly important to identify factors that increase destructive motivation, i.e., the officials' readiness to reduce the quality of their work. In 2015, answering the question about the factors that determine the readiness to change job, the majority of the surveyed Republican public servants noted a low level of income and high intensity of work (31.3% of the employees with a low level of motivation). In 2017, the importance of the low level of income increased up to 28%; while in 2018, on the contrary, high intensity of work became significant (Figure 2).

It is worth highlighting that the respondents did not consider the option of the absence of career prospects at all in 2015, although none of them offered the option of another job offer in 2018. Therefore, during the restructuring process, the officials resigned, as they had a choice or had been actively looking for other employment opportunities.

The respondents rated the material factors as the most important for the elimination of demotivation in the public service system (Table 2). At the beginning of the

investigation, most support was received by the proposal to increase public servants' salary (62.3% in 2015, and 69.1% in 2017). However, 50.8% of the respondents stood for additional compensation for overtime work in 2018. Moreover, the proposals for the introduction of additional material incentives (bonuses) were supported.

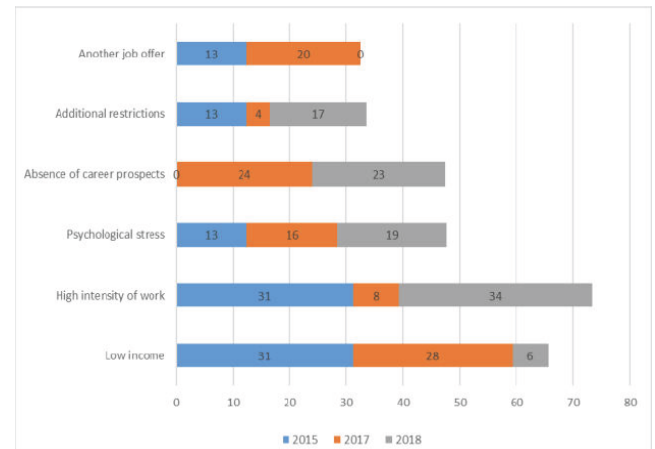


Figure 2: Distribution of answers to the question about the factors determining the readiness to change a job, %.

Before the reorganization, public servants under the survey regarded the possibility of independent legislative initiatives (4.7% in 2015 and 2.1% in 2017) and free meals (6.9% in 2015 and 12.4% in 2017) as the least effective. However, the attractiveness of being able to propose solutions to important issues increased in 2018.

According to the results of the survey by age groups, it should be noted that although material incentives are the most attractive for all groups of the respondents, they are the most significant for the officials of active working age, while social status is important for the officials of older age (Table 3). Incentives related to ensuring the comfort of work, the possibility of self-development, and managerial competencies implementation were more significant for young servants in 2017 and servants of retirement age in 2018.

DISCUSSION

The authors can conclude that the structure of public servants' motivation has changed in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) during the observation period. Before the widespread structural reorganization, the stability of employment and the high social status of public servants were the most attractive factors. After the reorganization, which was followed by

Table 2: Distribution of Answers on Proposals for the Improvement of the Public Servants' Motivation, % (it is Possible to Choose 4 Options)

	2015	2017	2018
Official salary increase	62.3	69.1	36.9
Social status rise	16.3	13.4	16.2
Flexible working hours	12.0	23.7	36.2
Additional material incentives	47.8	43.3	31.5
Accommodation, transport, etc., provided by the service	41.7	29.9	21.5
Additional medical care and insurance, sanatorium-resort care	31.9	26.8	15.4
Study leave for a second higher education or postgraduate training	15.9	15.5	24.6
Additional compensation for overtime work	37.3	41.2	50.8
The right to use lounges for officials and delegations in airports	0.4	3.1	1.5
Opportunity to propose options for regulations on your behalf	4.7	2.1	11.5
Free meals at the workplace	6.9	12.4	6.9
Guarantees of additional education, including postgraduate training	18.1	17.5	20.0
The opportunity to participate in the management	10.9	8.2	22.3
Compensation of transport costs, expenses for housing and public utilities, cellular communications, Internet services, etc.	16.3	15.5	9.2
The ability to come out with the initiatives independently	18.8	20.6	37.7

Table 3: Distribution of Answers to the Question about the Most Attractive Forms of Public Servants Motivation, %

	2015			2017			2018		
	under 30	from 30 to retirement age	past retiring age	under 30	from 30 to retirement age	past retiring age	under 30	from 30 to retirement age	past retiring age
material incentives	44.9	50.7	43.2	50.0	47.7	60.7	42.4	35.1	35.7
social status	2.6	5.2	8.3	3.4	5.1	7.1	3.5	5.4	9.5
managerial competences	8.1	9.7	15.9	11.4	8.8	3.6	16.7	25.9	4.8
improvement of the work comfort	31.6	25.1	25.8	22.7	30.1	17.9	25.0	20.8	33.3
opportunity for self-development	12.9	9.3	6.8	12.5	8.3	10.7	12.5	12.7	16.7

the changes of the officials' staff, as well as the increase in uncertainty and work intensity, the motivational component also changed. Consequently, the motives of high social status and career prospects have become the most significant.

It is worth highlighting that the attractiveness of the public service as a place to work had been constantly decreasing during the research period. The main demotivating factors were high intensity of work, low income, and lack of career prospects. It should be

noted that the objective indicators of public servants' income in the Republic are quite high. The average monthly nominal accrued wages in the Republican governmental authorities in 2018 amounted to 66,251 rubles, while the average salary in the Republic as a whole was 59,000 rubles. Therefore, most likely, indicating this factor, the respondents were rather focused on the fact that their earnings did not correspond to their status. This is also confirmed by the fact that the respondents defined their material status as lower middle class. The majority of the survey participants chose the options "We can easily buy household appliances and furniture, but we have no money to buy a car" and "There is enough money for food and clothes, but we cannot afford the purchase of household equipment, furniture, and trips outside the Republic".

The authors believe that the public servants' demotivation and the growth of destructive factors in their activities are primarily correlated to their disappointment. Applying for a vacant position, a person is guided by widespread ideas about the public service as a stable place of work, which is rather associated with a high social status, the possibility of ambitions realization, and a high level of income than the performance of complicated functions. They face extremely high work intensity and constantly changing conditions, including even the place of work and work functions. The authoritative powers of the lower ranks of government officials are often illusory, i.e., they do not make independent managerial decisions; moreover, the initiative on their part is often prohibited by law. At the same time, the income level corresponds to the average for the region. This state of affairs causes a negative attitude and destructive motivation. In the case of public servants, it often takes the forms of corruption, absenteeism, abuse of power, and nepotism.

Proposing the measures to increase the public servants' motivation, the respondents focused mainly on material incentives, as well as the impetuses that determine the comfort of work (ergonomic incentives). Most of the measures that determine the state personnel policy in governmental authorities is based on this broadly broadcast request. However, the results of the study show that monetary oriented motivation in public service is ineffective.

In terms of professional socialization, public servants internalize self-esteem as managing actors, who perform governmental functions. They are

constantly required to self-develop and to upgrade their qualifications, as these are the key principles of public service. Destructive motivation in the public service correlates with age and relevant professional experience. Therefore, the officials of active working age with less than 5 years of experience show the least motivation in the performance of their official duties. Thus, when planning the measures to increase the motivation of the officials, more attention should be paid to the implementation of the expectations of this category of public servants. According to the research results, activities aimed at the implementation of their managerial competencies will be the most attractive for them.

The results of the research allow the authors for concluding that the first hypothesis was partially confirmed. Despite the strong beliefs, additional guarantees and benefits are not the main factors to attract government officials to work, as well as the main motives to continue working as an official. The stability of employment, as well as the high social status of the officials, are the most significant impetuses.

The second hypothesis was fully confirmed. Indeed, the main demotivators reflect the main motives. Therefore, the risk of the influence of the disappointed expectations on the public servants' proficiency was confirmed.

The third hypothesis was also confirmed. Material incentives remain the most attractive for public servants. However, at the last stage of the study, there was an increase in the demand for the implementation of managerial powers, while the attractiveness of material incentives and the improvement of working conditions decreased.

The theoretical significance of the study is based on the development of tools that allow assessing destructive motivation in the regional public service. The practical significance is based on the ability to implement the developed tools to improve motivational policy both in particular governmental or local authorities and in the region as a whole.

Summarizing and adapting the existing management practices to overcome the destructive motivation for organizations, the authors can offer the following measures for the public service:

- To clarify and define officials' functions clearly to improve the organization of work;

- To diversify work, to provide independence, and to introduce additional responsibility for officials;
- To improve working conditions, especially in terms of time management optimization, to eliminate the necessity to constantly exceed normal working hours;
- To implement new technologies to eliminate the influence of the human factor and to automatize technical functions of accounting;
- To develop Key Performance Indicators (KPI) of officials, allowing to take into account each servant's contribution to the implementation of the governmental function;
- To adopt sanctions for various forms of destructive organizational behavior.

Additionally, since the respondents considered material motive as the most effective factor providing the elimination of psychological disappointment, special attention should be paid to the measures that allow limiting destructive motivation through the subsystem of rewards, benefits, and career management. Among them, the authors emphasize the following measures:

- Motivational diagnostics, i.e., the identification of motivational profiles, basic motives, and individual characteristics of the motivational mechanisms of public servants;
- The optimal combination of monetary and non-monetary motivation, taking into account the identified motivational profiles.

Therefore, the conducted research has indicated the relevance of the problem of destructive motivation for regional public service. To eliminate or limit destructive motivation, it is necessary to take into account the personal qualities of public servants and the compliance of motivational measures with their values and expectations.

CONCLUSION

The reasons for the destructive motivation of personnel are based on the conflict of interests between the employee and the organization, caused by the characteristics of the social environment. Most authors declare that the coordination of the interests of employees and employers will minimize this conflict and, as a result, eliminate the spread of destructive motivation at the organizational level. According to the

model of destructive motivation reproduction, it can be concluded that recommendations for destructive motivation limitation at the level of the work collective should be systemic and cover key areas of the organization's functioning.

1. According to the results of the research, a high level of motivation for employment in governmental bodies is observed in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia). However, there is a steady downward trend throughout the observation period. This confirms the relevance of the problem of the destructive motivation for the public service in particular since it is obvious that the technologies applied in the human resources management in this institution do not provide stable motivation of the officials to perform public functions effectively.
2. The conducted research has shown that in the public service the main factor of destructive motivation is the effect of disappointed expectations. The characteristic feature of this institution is the fact that all public officials are regarded by the society as subjects of government and acquire managerial competencies in the course of training, interiorize the value of continuous professional development, and demonstrate elite self-awareness. However, starting to fulfill their official duties, the public servants are faced with the necessity to implement the traditional bureaucratic model, which is not correlated with independent powers. The officials must simply implement administrative regulations, and, often, in conditions of stress and increased work intensity. This causes frustration and a tendency to minimize labor costs, i.e., destructive motivation.

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