

# PSYCHOLOGICAL WELL-BEING AS A CONDITION OF THE READINESS OF UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS FOR ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE

Emil Velinov – Oksana Isaeva – Svetlana Savinova

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## Abstract

The paper presents the results of the study of the psychological well-being of teachers of Russian universities as conditions of their psychological readiness for organizational changes. Personal attitude to innovations directly depends on the level of psychological well-being of the teacher. The paper methodology applies so called "Ready for organizational changes" psycho-diagnostic technique. The results of the study show a high level of awareness of teachers about the upcoming changes - the introduction of a remote mode of education stated by 92% of respondents, who acknowledged the content and essence of the changes. The willingness of university professors to support leadership in implementing organizational change and willingness to implement the proposed innovations are also linked to the characteristics of psychological well-being. The paper results show a link between the level of psychological well-being and the willingness of university professors to organizational change. The level of psychological well-being can be a predictor of the readiness of university professors for innovations.

**Key words:** psychological well-being, readiness for organizational changes, university professors

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## Introduction

In recent years, the world has developed what can be described as "the largest quasi-experiment in history to dramatically transform working and employment conditions".

This experiment unfolded in all areas of human life and activity, including education. It is about humanity's entry into the digital age of life, as well as global natural and man-made upheavals, including the 19-magnitude COVID pandemic.

Such transformations actualize new challenges and challenges of personal development: on the one hand, changes cause tension that affects a person, blocking or reducing his cognitive, creative activity; on the other hand, they require not only the ability to adapt to new situations, but the ability to develop in new conditions.

Changes in the organization of the educational process in universities, the introduction of new content and forms of education associated with the use of digital technologies were perceived ambiguously by the pedagogical community. The results of a survey of higher education teachers and staff, conducted by the International Association of Universities in 2019, showed that innovations related to the digitalization of higher education are universal: 87% of teachers noted the integration of digital technologies into the educational process, 79% - used digital technologies in their practice to varying degrees. At the same time, the level of readiness to work in the face of changes was significantly lower: only 39% of the instructors surveyed were willing to use online courses, blended learning formats, big data, blockchain, etc. Every fourth teacher surveyed admitted that he was not sufficiently prepared for such a future (Abramov et al., 2020). These data indicate, on the one hand, the tolerance of higher school teachers to changes, recognition of new opportunities for these changes, on the other hand, the lack of readiness for such changes, which was shown by the sudden and rapid introduction of distance learning associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The problem of a person's readiness for changes, in general, and the readiness of higher education teachers, in particular, is not sufficiently studied today. The question of studying the subjective prerequisites of the readiness of higher school teachers to change is becoming especially relevant today in connection with the new challenges of objective reality, as well as in connection with the search for predictors of successful functioning and positive development of modern man.

The purpose of this article is to study psychological well-being as a subjective prerequisite for readiness for organizational change. The choice of these characteristics is due to their status in the field of personal resources of a modern person: psychological well-being is recognized as a universal criterion for the positive socialization of a person.

## **1 Current state of the research problem**

The attitude to organizational changes as the development of new ideas, forms of behavior that are adequate to the nature of changes in the external environment, is studied not only in the

context of resistance to changes, but also in the context of readiness for them. Studying resistance to organizational change, the authors emphasize that the nature of this phenomenon is due to psychological mechanisms and behavioural characteristics that determine the direction of change (Mkrtychyan, Isaeva, 2015).

The phenomenon of readiness is widely studied in psychology and is defined by the authors from the point of view of various approaches. From the point of view of the activity approach, “readiness” is understood as a condition or ability for successful activity (Bahrombekovna, 2020). From the standpoint of a personal approach, readiness acts as an attitude towards a certain behavior, an attitude towards active actions. In the context of an innovative approach, readiness is a condition for successful innovation, a combination of personal, psychological, group socio-psychological, organizational socio-economic factors (Brynza, 2015).

From the standpoint of a complex socio-psychological approach, "readiness for change" or psychological readiness - the category of subjective psychological reality, which, on the one hand, is a consequence or result of exploratory volitional behavior (leading to the activation of the resource, motivational, energy spheres of the psyche), on the other hand, is the cause of awareness and behavior that change the subjective and objective reality of a person (Chirkov, 2015). The relevance of this approach for our research lies in the fact that the readiness to change is directly related to the subjective psychological reality, i.e. emphasizes its dependence not on external factors, but on the resources of the individual.

In understanding personal resources, we rely on the Diener definition. and Fujita F., who understand personal resources as individual psychological characteristics associated with more successful implementation of various activities and a higher level of psychological well-being (Ivanova et al., 2018). Leontiev divides personal resources into 4 groups: psychological resources of stability, psychological resources of self-regulation, motivational resources, instrumental resources (Leontiev, 2016).

Researchers of subjective well-being focus on its affective component, pointing out the positive aspects of perception. The generalized characteristic of well-being in the logic of this approach is life satisfaction as the achievement of pleasure and avoidance of displeasure, the feeling of happiness (Argyle, 2003). In the concept of Diener (1984), subjective well-being is understood as a person's satisfaction in various spheres of life. If a person often experiences satisfaction with his life and rarely unpleasant feelings, then he has a high level of well-being.

A person with dominant negative emotions, rarely experiencing feelings of joy and happiness, has a low level of subjective well-being. However, in our opinion, this approach has some limitations, namely, the exaggeration of the emotional component, which undoubtedly acts as a reliable indicator of a person's well-being.

Followers of the eudemonic approach consider well-being from the point of view of the completeness of self-realization of an individual in specific life circumstances and conditions, in a harmonious synthesis of the needs of the social environment and the development of one's own individuality.

## **2 Method and Data sample**

The study involved 101 teachers (12.9% men, 87.1% women) from higher educational institutions of the Russian Federation (Moscow, St. Petersburg, Nizhny Novgorod, Yekaterinburg, Novosibirsk, Pskov, Surgut, Chelyabinsk, Saratov) in such areas of professional activity as management, economics, psychology, pedagogy, law. Of these, 21 people (20.8%) are teachers without an academic degree, 69 people (68.3%) are teachers with the academic degree "Candidate of Science", 11 people (10.9%) are teachers with the academic degree "Doctor of Science". 24 people (23.7% of the study participants) - under 30 years old, 34 people (33.7%) - teachers aged 40-49, 13 people (12.9%) - aged 30-39 years old, 30 people (29.8%) - over 50 years old. 2 people (2.0%) work at the university for less than a year, 9 people (8.9%) have a teaching experience of 1-3 years, 8 people (7.9%) have 3 to 5 years of experience, 27 people (26.7%) - from 5 to 8 years, 55 people (54.5%) - more than 8 years.

To assess the psychological readiness of university teachers to introduce innovations, we used the methodology "Readiness for organizational changes" by D. Holt (2007) in the adaptation of E. Naumtseva. The respondents were also asked to fill out the author's questionnaire, assessing the degree of their agreement with the statements describing the specifics of the changes carried out in the university - the introduction of distance learning forms - using a 5-point scale (where 5 - completely agree, 4 - agree, 3 - difficult say, I cannot define for myself, 2 - disagree, 1 - completely disagree). To measure psychological well-being, we used the Ryff (1995) scale adapted by Zhukovskaya (2011). The statistical operationalization was carried out using the SPSS 25.0 for Windows software package.

### 3 Research results

At the first stage, a study was carried out on the perception of university professors of ongoing organizational changes (the introduction of distance learning due to the pandemic), as well as an assessment of their readiness to implement changes in the university.

**Table 1: The attitude of university teachers to innovation**

Statement	Assessment scale (number of respondents (%))				
	1 Completely disagree	2 Disagree	3 Cannot say	4 Agree	5 Complet ely agree
I have an understanding of what the essence of the innovation is and why this innovation is needed right now	3 (3,0%)	5 (5,0%)	18 (17,8%)	26 (25,7%)	49 (48,5%)
My attitude to innovation - the remote form of work and teaching students	Positive - 20 (19.8%) Negative - 39 (38.6%) Neutral - 42 (41.6%)				
I have a desire to participate in innovations and support them	17 (16,8%)	12 (11,9%)	28 (27,7%)	28 (27,7%)	16 (15,8%)
I have enough existing knowledge base to implement innovations	3 (3,0%)	10 (9,9%)	21 (20,8%)	46 (45,5%)	21 (20,8%)
I value my abilities, skills and behaviors required in the new work environment	1 (1,0%)	7 (6,9%)	30 (29,7%)	39 (38,6%)	24 (23,8%)

Source: own elaboration in SPSS

The results of the study (Table 1) show a high level of awareness among university teachers about the essence of the upcoming changes - active introduction of distance learning, - understanding of potential risks if no changes occur (92% of respondents noted this).

#### **4 Discussion**

At the same time, the attitude of teachers to the introduced organizational changes is rather negative (38.6% of respondents indicate a negative and 41.6% - a neutral attitude towards them; only 19.8% of teachers have a positive attitude to the introduced organizational changes).

Perception of university management by teachers as committed to changes, ready to support them, and assessment of their own capabilities to implement the proposed innovations are associated with a number of characteristics of psychological well-being of employees: the presence of a goal in life, a sense of meaningfulness in their past and present, a positive attitude towards themselves and acceptance of themselves the ability to empathize and establish trusting relationships with others, understanding the need to make concessions in relationships; the competence of teachers, their ability to choose or create an appropriate context for the realization of personal needs and values;

#### **Conclusion**

The feasibility of changes and the support of the university leadership in the implementation of organizational changes among teachers have similar connections and structure in the context of psychological well-being. The feasibility of change and management support is determined by the severity of all components of psychological well-being, except for the component of autonomy. In other words, management support in a situation of change and ideas about the realism and feasibility of changes in their own activities and activities of the university are determined by the presence of life goals, the ability to manage their social environment, and build positive relationships with people, self-acceptance and a tendency towards personal growth. The ability to make independent judgments and actions is not tied to perceptions of the feasibility and feasibility of change and leadership support.

The relevance of the changes, the idea of their timeliness and the appropriateness of inclusion in the context of a specific educational organization turned out to be unrelated to the psychological well-being of the respondents: none of the characteristics of psychological well-being correlated with this component of readiness for organizational changes. This may be due

to various reasons, one of which is determined by the nature of the threats and risks of the pandemic situation.

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### **Contact**

Emil Velinov

SKODA AUTO University, Department of Marketing and Management

Mlada Boleslav 29301, Na Karmeli 1457 Czech Republic

RISEBA University of Applied Sciences

Meza street 3, Riga-1048, Latvia

emil.velinov@savs.cz

Oksana Isaeva

Higher School of Economics Nizhny Novgorod

25/12 Bolshaya Pecherskaya street, 603155 Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

oisaeva@hse.ru

Svetlana Savinova

Higher School of Economics Nizhny Novgorod

25/12 Bolshaya Pecherskaya street, 603155 Nizhny Novgorod, Russia

ssavinova@hse.ru