



Issues on Forensic Psychologists Training in Contemporary Conditions

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Children who are victims of abuse must be provided with effective remedies. This can be achieved through a range of procedures. In the legal system, an important tool for assessing the psychological state and mental development of minors is forensic psychological examination, which plays a decisive role in judicial decision-making.

Keywords: expert staff training; forensic psychological examination of minors; child; child abuse.

Проблемні питання щодо підготовки експертів-психологів у сучасних умовах

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Для дитини, яка стала жертвою насильства, має бути забезпечено ефективні засоби правового захисту, шлях до яких пов'язаний із низкою процедур. Важливим інструментом у правовій системі для оцінювання психологічного стану та психічного розвитку неповнолітніх осіб є судово-психологічна експертиза, яка відіграє вирішальну роль у прийнятті судових рішень.

Ключові слова: підготовка експертних кадрів; судова психологічна експертиза неповнолітніх; дитина; жорстоке поводження з дітьми.

In the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and other countries, for any child who has become a victim of violence associated with child abuse — including physical, sexual, and psychological abuse (such as neglect by parents or caregivers, bullying including cyberbullying, sexual violence including rape, sexual trafficking, ex-

ploitation on the Internet, sexual harassment, humiliation, threats, and intimidation, etc.) — the path to justice involves a series of procedures ensuring the availability of effective legal protection measures. Provisions related to child protection are outlined in the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of



Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse [1].

A crucial tool within the legal system designed to assess the psychological state and mental development of minors in the context of judicial proceedings is forensic psychological examination of minors, which plays a decisive role in judicial decision-making.

Forensic psychological examination is one of the forms of applying psychological expertise in forensic psychology, assisting pretrial investigation bodies and courts in resolving psychological issues relevant to evaluating various individual characteristics of the mental activity of victims, suspects, defendants, plaintiffs, respondents, and witnesses. One of the primary objectives of forensic psychological examination is to determine the individual psychological traits, emotional states and reactions of the examinee, as well as the level of development and patterns of cognitive processes (such as memory, thinking, imagination, speech, etc.). When conducting forensic psychological examinations, well-established psychological methodologies widely recognized in scientific practice, as well as their proprietary modifications that have undergone validation, are utilized. These methods are selected with consideration of the specific nature of forensic psychological examination and the particular questions posed to the psychological examination [2].

Children become victims of murder, hunger, and sexual violence in conflicts worldwide. The increase in such incidents is highlighted in the report published by the United Nations Secre-

tary-General [3]. In European countries, the examination of a child is conducted after a certain period during which the expert establishes a trusting relationship with the child.

The current state and prospects for the development of forensic psychological examination primarily reflect the needs of judicial and investigative practice, dictated by the nature of crimes, the level of professionalism, and the degree of development of the forensic institution. The realization of the potential capabilities of forensic institutions directly depends on the qualifications of forensic experts, their working conditions, and the availability of scientific-methodological, informational, and technical-instrumental support. It is well-known that the quality, reliability, and scientific validity of expert conclusions largely depend on the expert's qualifications.

The increase in the number of forensic examinations, the emergence of new expert tasks, and the introduction of technological innovations into expert practice all necessitate constant attention to the development and enhancement of forensic experts' professional level. Therefore, special attention must be paid to personnel work: the selection and training of qualified specialists proficient in modern research methods, and the improvement of core educational programs for expert training based on a competency approach to scientific-methodological schools.

Professional training of forensic experts does not simply mean acquiring knowledge in a particular science, technology, or craft during higher education



(so-called basic knowledge). Such basic knowledge is not adapted to the process of judicial proof and cannot serve court proceedings in its raw form. The research conducted by a forensic expert is characterized by properly (both scientifically and procedurally) documented results and well-argued conclusions that constitute an objective source of evidence in a case [4]. Basic knowledge is transformed through special training and practical (expert) activity, which is specific exclusively to the forensic expert profession.

The training of psychologist experts, as with other specialties, includes the following directions: theoretical — acquiring knowledge about procedural, organizational, and general methodological issues of forensic examination and the fundamentals of conducting examinations in the relevant specialty; practical — gaining skills in conducting examinations and preparing draft conclusions; personal — opportunities for the development of components of professional competence and self-development. An individual approach is a specific function of managing expert training, given that specialists undergoing expert specialization have varying levels of theoretical knowledge, practical skills, and personal characteristics.

In organizing and conducting psychological examination, the forensic psychologist must strictly observe professional ethical norms when working with children and adolescents who have suffered from violence and abuse. The forensic psychologist bears a moral obligation to continuously improve professionally by utilizing all available

forms of additional training, studying scientific and methodological literature in psychology and related disciplines within the scope of forensic psychological expertise, and assimilating their own experience and that of their colleagues.

Psychological examination and intervention always form a system of interaction between the researcher and the subject. Therefore, the effectiveness largely depends on how this interaction unfolds. The researcher (forensic psychologist) must demonstrate great patience, resourcefulness, the ability to control their behavior, and the capacity to establish communication with the subject (child), fostering a sense of sympathy and trust during examination and intervention.

Analyzing the established forensic expert practice in the Republic of Moldova, Ukraine, and other countries concerning the professional training of expert personnel, common stages can be identified and systematized as follows: studying forensic examination theory under the guidance of mentors; principles of forensic expert activity; methodology of conducting expert research; preparation of expert conclusions; certification; and obtaining authorization for independent forensic examination in a specific specialty.

It should be noted that Ukraine has implemented qualification exams utilizing an electronic system for automated specialist testing [5]. The test tasks comprise a list of theoretical, organizational, and procedural questions related to forensic examination, as well as specific expert specialties. This type of testing is a significant element of modernity — a means of assessing forensic



experts' knowledge that facilitates the improvement of training systems and the objective evaluation of certification outcomes. The widespread adoption of testing is justified by the high technological capability of result verification and the independence of outcomes from the subjective opinions of examiners.

Thus, professional training of forensic experts encompasses two stages:

- 1) Qualitative preparation of competitive, competent professionals possessing a high level of legal and linguistic culture and legal awareness, fundamental knowledge in legislative, law enforcement, law application, and advisory activities demanded by the state and society;
- 2) Formation of professional-special competencies ensuring the expert's ability to apply expert research methods in professional activities; the expert's skill to employ forensic examination methods and tools during procedural and non-procedural actions to detect, document, seize, and preliminarily investigate objects for establishing factual data (circumstances of the case) in criminal, civil, and administrative proceedings; and readiness to provide methodological assistance to law enforcement entities on the appointment and conduct of forensic examinations, as well as consultations on modern research capabilities of various objects.

Individual training plans for specific expert specialties are developed according to specially designed and approved

programs. The general course covers procedural, organizational, and general methodological issues of forensic examination, conducting expert research, and more. Specific specialty training includes general concepts (objects, tasks, materials, and material-technical base necessary for corresponding examinations, research methods, etc.). Each trainee is assigned a supervisor, usually a highly qualified expert with extensive experience, including Doctors and PhD holders.

Improving the professional training of personnel is reflected in the enhancement of the quality of expert research and the reduction of the time required for examinations. To achieve these goals, it is necessary to improve the system of advanced training for experts, which is facilitated by scientific and practical conferences and seminars where such issues as experience sharing, familiarization with new methods and techniques of expert research, discussion of problems in expert practice and measures for their resolution, and addressing contentious questions arising among experts, are discussed. The current internship system requires expanding contacts to improve qualifications through placements in other expert institutions in both nearby and more distant foreign countries.

The professional level of experts is also enhanced by their engagement in scientific research activities. In the process of developing and implementing scientific advancements, the most important tasks and challenges that determine the development of forensic examination and criminalistics are



addressed, with some of these serving as the foundation for the preparation of dissertations for academic degrees.

Regulatory documentation coordinating expert training programs requires constant refinement considering modern demands, updating the material-technical and experimental base of expert institutions for conducting research, and the emergence of new forensic examination methodologies.

It is also essential to develop international cooperation in the field of forensic expert activity, which involves interaction between states to exchange experience, knowledge, and technologies in forensic science; participation in joint projects and scientific developments; conducting internships in forensic institutions of different countries; exchanging scientific topics; publishing

the results of research conducted by forensic institutions of various states in collections of scientific papers; and holding joint conferences, training sessions, and seminars in the field of forensic science, among other activities.

The issues addressed in these theses, if properly resolved, in our opinion, contribute to improving the professional qualifications and training levels of forensic psychologists in accordance with modern requirements. This, in turn, ensures the quality of forensic psychological examinations, including those involving children who have become victims of violence, and facilitates the achievement of the desired outcomes that are significant for the investigation of specific crimes and the establishment of a reliable evidentiary base under contemporary conditions.

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