Possibilities of the Method of Semantic Differential in Determining the Peculiarities of Police Officers Interpersonal Interaction

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Received Date: December 7, 2020
Accepted Date: January 18, 2021
Online Date: March 5, 2021

Publisher: Kare Publishing
© 2021 Applied Linguistics Research Journal
E-ISSN: 2651-2629

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ABSTRACT
The article highlights the psychodiagnostic possibilities of the semantic differential method as a tool for studying the peculiarities of police officers’ interpersonal interaction. According to psycholinguistics and psychosemantics, the semantic differential is traditionally used for qualitative and quantitative indexing of meanings or personal values using bipolar scales, defined by pairs of antonymous adjectives. This research was based on the assumption that the system of attitudes of the individual is manifested in his evaluative judgments, which are classified according to the scheme of logical dichotomies. Bipolar assessments were quantified on the basis of three scales: activity, strength (potency) and attitude. The article demonstrates that the semantic differential method gives an objective picture of the police officers perception of their managers. The algorithm of mathematical data processing is given; the mechanism underlying the relationship of police managers with subordinates is illustrated. It was found that the method of semantic differential allows diagnosing the perception and attitude of the police officer to managers of police units and colleagues as partners in professional activities and communication. This method is useful for self-study and self-development of communication subjects, the formation of communicative competence in police officers, and building psychological support and psychological follow-up of police officers during their official activities.
Keywords: semantic differential, interpersonal interaction, police officer, psychological diagnostics, police manager.

1. Introduction
At present, understanding the importance of the psychological factor as a unique organizational resource has set the task of developing practical tools for interaction between different subjects. Traditionally, the work of the staff of a police organization is concentrated in the activities of an individual specialist, the tasks of which include the use of functional elements of professional activities such as adaptation, development, motivation, performance evaluation and so on. Taken as a whole, the specified processes determine the degree of organizational efficiency through the development of tools for managing the communicative activities of professionals, among which the process of interpersonal interaction of police subjects becomes a priority.

The constant interaction of a police officer with various participants in procedural communication, including carriers of negative mental qualities, quite often significantly complicates the process of cognition and can cause errors. Favourable tools of psychological science facilitate the development of measures that remove or reduce substantially the unfavourable conditions of cognition, ensure the creation of such conditions of activities that will avoid the avoidance of errors in perception, assessment of facts on the part of police officers.
The semantic differential is a rather successful psychological tool for studying the semantic spaces of specific subjects, including police officers. American psychologist Charles Egerton Osgood developed this method in the mid-50s of the XX century. The main idea of this experimental method, described in the book “The Measurement of Meaning”, is to characterize the meaning of words on three gradable-independent parameters such as assessment (“good-bad” scale), strength (“strong-weak” scale) and activity (“active-passive”), which determines the dislocation of the word within a particular semantic space (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). To more accurately determine the values of these parameters, more private scales for the dislocation of the words (“big-small”, “cold-hot”, “dry-wet”, etc.) are used; in some cases, experimenters are limited to the characteristics of the values on private scales, which does not involve further narrowing of the values to the necessary parameters. Today, the semantic differential is most often used for qualitative and quantitative indexing of meanings or personal values using bipolar scales, defined by pairs of antonymous adjectives, between seven gradations of the degree of entry of a word a certain quality.

The topicality of the outlined range of problems is highlighted by the fact that the semantic differential, widely known in psycholinguistics and psychosemantics, is rarely used for psychological diagnostics of interpersonal relations among specialists of socionomic professions. In our opinion, this method is very informative for studying the perception of different objects of interpersonal cognition by police officers. First of all, the semantic differential allows studying the perception of police officers both of their managers (leaders) and colleagues as partners in official activities and communication. The study of the peculiarities of mutual perception, interpersonal relations is essential for effective group interaction and optimization of police activities. Besides, establishing the principles of interpersonal interaction through the understanding of changes taking place in the mind of the police activities objects provides an opportunity to develop the ability correctly and perceive individuals as participants in communication objectively.

2. Literature Review

The analysis of recent researches and publications on psychological issues shows that high-quality tools help the specialist to see the image of the assessable object, which is formed in the mind of the person of interest (Barko, Okhrimenko, Ostapovich, Medvediev, & Sprychuk, 2020; Bondarenko et al., 2020; Bratel, Kostiuk, Bratel, Okhrimenko, Filonenko, 2020; Krylov, & Manichev, 2013; Shapar, Timchenko, & Shvydchenko, 2002). Besides some researchers emphasize that associative bonds are established between verbal and nonverbal stimuli (Eliseev, 2006; Simmat, 1992; Sobchik, 2003). According to other scientists, a person has an innate language capacity, a system of unique filters. These filters work on both understandings of language and response to it. (Aleksandrov, Okhrimenko, & Drozd, 2017; Ostapovich, et al., 2020; Shvets, et al., 2020). At the same time, Kh’yell & Zigler (1997), Halyan (2011) point out that a human being is genetically predisposed to language perception; he/she can distinguish it from other noises. Language helps to limit the information that an individual receives.

The strategic importance of English is considered differently by scholars. Some scholars revealed the English language significance in the students' self-education of socio-humanitarian specialties (Melnychuk, Rebukha, Zavgorodnia, & Bloshchynskyi, 2018). Another scholar, I. Bloshchynskyi, presented the significance of information and communication technologies usage by future border guard officers who study on specialty «State border security and protection» according to the first (bachelor) level of higher education during the foreign language professional training for state examinations on discipline „Professionally-oriented foreign language” (Bloshchynskyi, 2017). It is presented in the study of A. Baliandr, O. Komarnytska, I Bloshchynskyi that participation in the Frontex projects allows Ukrainian border guards to take part in international projects and programmes, namely: detection of stolen cars, forged documents, dog handlers training, professional English language training, also using the web platform Virtual Aula for cooperation and training in the border protection sphere with European counterparts etc. (Baliandr, Komarnytska, & Bloshchynskyi, 2019).

Another study by O. Komarnytska, A. Baliandr, I Bloshchynskyi identifies the ESP teaching strategies of the State Border Guard Service of Ukraine training in the framework of European language standards. They concluded that according to the needs analysis results, the Ukrainian border guards require improving their professional foreign language competence based on the European educational standards and best practices. They paid main attention to developing the listening and speaking skills of border guards. The methodology of the course is aimed at forming the border guards’ foreign-language professional competency, which will facilitate their effective service in the state border protection units. The course program provides border guards with the opportunity to develop the language competence and strategies they need to effectively engage in professional communication situations that they can have at the border, both while conducting border surveillance activities and border checks. (Komarnytska, Baliandr, Bloshchynskyi, 2018).

Any object perceived by an individual (person, subject, the image of a subject, name of a subject, etc.) causes specific reactions in him/her. Researchers also note that the semantic differential structures the perception of the object in three directions: the activity of the object, the strength (potency) of the object, the attitude of the
respondent to the object (Etkind, 1979; Osgood, Susi, Tannenbaum, 1957; Zakharova, & Stryukova, 1999). It is noted that in the case of diagnosing the perception of managers by subordinates, you can see the assessment of each manager by a subordinate using these indicators, the collective “portrait” of each manager in the perception of the police formation, the correct comparison of profiles of different managers or one manager by different units (Barko, Zelenyi, Irkhin, 2009; Hudson, 2014; Zhuravlev, 1993).

It is also worth noting that researchers’ works (Fedorenko, Dotsenko, Okhrimenko, Radchenko, & Gorbenco, 2020; Hays, K., Regoli, R., Hewitt, J., 2007) are devoted to the psychological problems of interaction between managers and subordinates. Attention was also paid to studying the relationship between the police and the community (Barko et al., 2020; Bondarenko, Okhrimenko, Tverdokhvalova, Mannapova, & Prontenko, 2020; Hudson, 2014; Pašniciuc, 2017). However, in their research, the authors often used traditional methods such as surveys, interviews, questionnaires, sociometry, etc. Therefore, the semantic differential method in the research on the study of the interpersonal interaction of police officers was practically not used.

Given the above, the research aims to reveal the psychodiagnostic potential of the semantic differential method in psycholinguistics and psychosemantics to determine the peculiarities of police officers’ interpersonal interaction.

The results of the author’s research significantly complement the existing publications on the outlined issues, as they present qualitative and quantitative indicators of the use of the semantic differential method to diagnose the perception and attitude of police officers to managers of police units and colleagues as partners in professional activities and communication.

3. Methodology

The main research methods used in our work were the semantic differential method as a tool for diagnosing the interpersonal interaction of the National Police officers with their managers, comparative analysis, systematization and generalization of scientific research data on the outlined issues, methods of mathematical statistics. The research was conducted on the basis of patrol police units in ten oblasts of Ukraine. A total of 510 police officers were interviewed, including 405 men and 105 women. The age of the respondents ranged from 20 to 30 years, with special ranks from private to sergeant. The obtained data reflect an objective picture of the real interaction of police officers with managerial staff, confirmed by the use of other methods, including interviews, conversations, observations. They, therefore, allow deriving reliable conclusions at a significant point of p<0.01.

This research presents a typical version of the semantic differential results processing conducted by us on the example of one of the police units by assessing the activity, the potency of their leader, and attitude to him (n= 22).

The research was performed according to the Regulations on Academic Honesty requirements at the National Academy of Internal Affairs, which were developed on the basis of Ukrainian and world experience of ethical rulemaking. This document was approved by the Academic Council of the National Academy of Internal Affairs (Protocol No. 5 of 27.03.2018) and implemented by order of the Rector of the Academy (Order No. 422 of 30.03.2018). According to its provisions, the scientific community members are guided by the rules of ethical conduct and professional communication; respect the principles, values, norms, rules, and conditions of academic honesty in their activities. The consent to participate in the study was obtained from all subjects.

4. Results

The diagnostics procedure was based on the assumption that the system of attitudes of the individual concerning important people is manifested in his evaluative judgments, which are classified by consciousness according to the scheme of logical dichotomies (pleasant - unpleasant, safe - dangerous, etc.). Bipolar assessments obtained by the semantic differential method were quantified. Three scales described the leader’s interaction with subordinates: activity, strength, and attitude. The activity of the leader means the nature of the organization of interaction between him and subordinates. The strength (potency) was interpreted as a degree of his influence on subordinates (based on the readiness / sphericity of the leader, his will, ability to stay determined, as well as his authority). The leader’s attitude showed a degree of closeness, mutual understanding between him and the team of subordinates.

The combination of these characteristics created a fairly holistic picture of the interpersonal relationships between employees and managers. The peculiarity of the semantic differential method is the lack of direct characteristics of the assessee; the respondents would give certain points. The metaphorical diagnosis procedure is not always correctly understood by the subjects, so the psychologist’s important task was to explain the assessment principle, which is to describe their impressions of the assessee. The diagnostics technique is time-consuming for the respondents, so the instructions contained a clear explanation of the objectives of the study, as well as the rules of procedure. The following version of the instruction was used in our research:

“Dear respondent! You are asked to rate your managers using paired qualities that describe a particular impression of the object being assessed. We need a negative or positive sign of the proposed features only to process
the results. There are no good or bad qualities; each person has a certain combination of them. Thus, the artist, painting a portrait, does not divide the paint into “good” and “bad”. Your task is to draw a psychological portrait of the leader you will be asked to. Assess the closeness of the leader’s quality from the left or right column and put the appropriate sign. Then assess the degree of the quality you have chosen in scores:

1 or −1 – the quality is insignificant;
2 or −2 – the quality is average;
3 or −3 – the quality is significant;
0 – if it is difficult to attribute both qualities to this leader.
0 – if it is difficult to determine the quality of the leader.

**Blank registration form:**

| 1. Weak | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Strong |
| 2. Irresponsible | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Responsible |
| 3. Communicative | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Uncommunicative |
| 4. Compliant | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Stubborn |
| 5. Quiet | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Loud |
| 6. Rude | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Tender |
| 7. Dependent | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Independent |
| 8. Uncertain | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Assured |
| 9. Passive | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Active |
| 10. Unstable | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Resistant |
| 11. Unfair | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Fair |
| 12. Irritable | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | +1 | +2 | +3 | Imperturbable |

The proposed 12 antonymous pairs have a semantic link with the characteristics:

- the activity of the leader (pairs 3, 6, 9, 12);
- potency (pairs 1, 4, 7, 10);
- attitude to him (pairs 2, 5, 8, 11).

The adjectives of the left column mean the absence of potency or activity, negative perception of the object, the adjectives of the right column denote the presence of potency, activity, positive perception of the object.

When re-measuring with the same respondents, it is worth choosing other antonymous pairs that describe the same characteristics and are located in the same sequence. The essential condition is that they should not contain direct characteristics of the object (for example, a person – aggressive) but should have associative characteristics (language – sharp, onion – evil). To compare one leader’s perceptions by different units, you need to present the same antonymous pairs. The assessment procedure requires anonymity; it is better to conduct a diagnosis with a group of employees. For ease of processing, it is recommended to use a form on paper in a large cell.

**Mathematical processing of results and their interpretation.** The semantic differential method allowed with the help of simple statistical characteristics to quite clearly process the results and interpret them. As such characteristics, the arithmetic mean of the measured value, variance, mean square (standard) deviation, the correlation coefficient was proposed.

The primary processing of the results was to compile a statistical series of the measured value, i.e., activity, potency of the leader in the eyes of subordinates, attitude to him. The arithmetic means of the measured value within the unit and the degree of unanimity of assessments, expressed by the variance and mean square deviation, were calculated. Once the average assessments of each leader on the three measured indicators were identified, it was interesting to trace their interdependence. Having calculated the correlation coefficients of the respective values, it is possible to determine whether the leader’s potency or activity influences the attitude to him within this unit.

The algorithm for mathematical processing of the results using the semantic differential is as follows:

**Stage 1. Construction of a statistical series in the form of a table.**

| xᵢ | −3 | −2 | −1 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 |
| nᵢ | n₁ | n₂ | n₃ | n₄ | n₅ | n₆ | n₇ |

xᵢ – assessment of a certain quality of the leader on a seven-score scale;
nᵢ – the frequency of xᵢ value, i.e., how many times the xᵢ score was marked when assessing the leader according to the studied parameter by all employees of the unit as a whole.
Stage 2. Calculation of the arithmetic mean.

If \( n \) police officers took part in the survey, the average value is calculated from the formula:

\[
X = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} x_i n_i}{N},
\]

where \( N = nk \) where \( k \) is the number of repetitions in assessing the quality, in this case, \( k=4 \), i.e. the investigated quality is assessed by \( n \) police officers in the proposed form on four occasions (in four pairs of antonymous adjectives). The average value of \( X \) is an indicator of the aggregate assessment of this quality of the leader by the whole unit, whereupon being a fairly objective characteristic, as it eliminates the influence of subjective factors (e.g., the bias of individual employees towards this leader at the time of the survey).

Stage 3. Calculation of the mean square deviation.

The mean square deviation is an indicator of the degree of dispersion of values of the variable near its mean \( X \), i.e., the degree of unanimity and cohesion of subordinates in assessing the leader’s quality. The mean square deviation is calculated as the square root of the variance:

\[
\sigma = \sqrt{\frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} (x_i - X)^2}{N-1}}
\]

The described three stages of mathematical processing of diagnostic data reveal a picture of perception of the leader by subordinates. This brings us to the possibility to imagine the style of management communication of each of them.

Let us consider the processing of the semantic differential results conducted by us on the example of one of the police units according to the leader’s activity assessment (the control group consisted of 22 police officers). The activity is assessed by the second, fifth, eighth, and eleventh pairs of adjectives in our example. After processing all 22 forms, the statistical series of assessments looked like this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The arithmetic mean of the activity is calculated:

\[
X(A) = (\frac{-3.8 - 2.3 - 1.6 + 0.8 + 1.22 + 2.19 + 3.22}{22}) = 1.02
\]

The variance \( D = 2.79 \). The mean square deviation \( \sigma = 1.62 \).

The obtained characteristics allowed us to conclude that the leader’s activity is evaluated positively, although not high enough, with the dispersion of the respondents’ opinions \( (D = 2.79; \sigma = 1.62) \). The described procedure of calculating characteristics is repeated twice more to reveal the average value of the potency assessments concerning the leader’s perception by subordinates and assessments of the attitude to him. The mean square deviation is calculated for each of the obtained assessments.

Thus, each leader receives three assessments from subordinates, which are interesting both in themselves and in comparison with the corresponding assessments of other leaders. It should be noted that the absolute priority given to these comparisons is undesirable because the diagnosis reveals a perception at a particular time (which may not be typical); a more accurate assessment requires a re-examination with the presentation of other pairs of adjectives.

It is advisable to compare the data obtained after the above processing by calculating their correlation. This processing stage aims to determine the extent to which the leader's attitude is related to his activity or potency.

Our experimental data indicate no interdependence between the activity and potency of the leader in the perception of police officers. Regarding the relationship between potency and attitude, there are quite high positive correlation coefficients (0.65-0.70), which indicates the proportionality of changes in these parameters; that is, the stronger (more potential) the leader is, the more attention is paid to him by subordinates and the better their mutual relations. The assessments of the activity and attitude are also positively correlated (0.55-0.65), i.e. the increase in activity of the leader results in a tendency to increase the attentive attitude to him on the part of subordinate police officers.

The research has shown that persistent and dominant leaders are rated by subordinates as those who possess high potency, are moderately or highly active, but not with too high scores on the scale of attitudes. At the same time, the leaders who have developed positive business relationships with subordinates received high scores on the scales of attitude, potency and moderate scores on the scale of activity. Non-authoritative leaders were assessed with the lowest number of scores on all studied indicators.
Stage 4. Calculation of the obtained assessments correlation.

Determining the correlation coefficients between the indicators of activity, potency and attitude of leaders will establish the interdependence of these indicators of interpersonal interaction in police teams, find out how increasing or decreasing the level of activity of the manager of the police organization will affect the attitude of subordinates to him, as well as how other changes in potency indicators will affect the quality of interpersonal relationships within the team of the police organization, etc. To make the appropriate calculations, it is necessary to calculate the average values of the assessments of each of the indicators (activity, potency, attitude) for all leaders under assessment. In our research, the police representatives have assessed 15 leaders of different levels at once.

Suppose one leader by activity was evaluated by the average value of Ai. In that case, the average assessment of the activity of all leaders of X (A) is calculated by the formula of the arithmetic mean. The same formula is used to calculate the arithmetic mean of the leaders’ assessments of the potency of X (P) and attitude of X (At).

The formula determines the correlation coefficient of the activity and potency of rAP:

\[
r_{AP} = \frac{\sum_{i=1}^{n} \left( A_i - A \right) \left( P_i - P \right)}{n \sqrt{\sigma_A^2 \sigma_P^2}},
\]

where \( \sigma_A \) and \( \sigma_P \) are the mean square deviations of A and P values from their mean values.

The correlation coefficients of the activity and attitude of \( r_{AP \alpha} \) as well as activity and attitude of \( r_{AP \alpha} \) are determined similarly.

As a result of calculating the correlation of assessments of activity, potency, and attitude, you can see the psychological mechanism for building police officers’ attitude toward their managers. The research revealed that the leaders who adhere to an authoritarian leadership style received high scores from subordinates on the potency scale, moderate or high scores on the activity scale, and moderate attitude scale scores. The leaders who adhere to a democratic style received high scores on the attitude and potency scale and moderate scores on the scale of activity. Finally, the leaders who adhere to a liberal leadership style were rated low on all three indicators (activity, potency, and attitude). Also, the correlation analysis results did not establish interdependency between the indicators of activity and potency of the leader in interpersonal interaction with police officers. Thus, these correlations may indicate that the police manager’s effectiveness and leadership style depend mostly on the formation of indicators of potency and attitude. To a lesser extent, it depends on the indicators of activity. Police managers, who are characterized by a progressive democratic leadership style, show high indices on the scales of potency and attitude, and moderate and low indicators on all scales characterize less effective managers.

5. Discussion

Studying the peculiarities of interpersonal interaction in groups (teams) of organizations is not new. It is in some way developed in science, but its relevance is not diminishing, which directs scientific research in this sphere. The semantic differential method initiated by Ch. Osgood and described with colleagues today is a common tool for quantitative and qualitative indexing of values using bipolar scales based on a combination of scaling procedures and controlled associations (Osgood, Suci, & Tannenbaum, 1957). According to some scholars, the method is an effective tool for assessing the stimulus in certain features on the basis of scales set by the experimenter, and therefore is widely used in psychosemantic research (Burlachuk, 2008; Eliseev, 2006; Kozhevnikova, & Vyzhanina; 2016; Sobchik, 2003; Hudson, 2014).

A number of studies testify that the semantic differential is used in psycholinguistics to construct subjective semantic spaces, as well as in research related to the perception and behaviour of a person, analysis of pragmatic and connotative meanings of words, personal meanings, etc., especially in professional activities or training of socionicomic specialists (teachers, psychologists, etc.) (Sheremet, Suprun, M., Suprun, D., Okhrimenko, & Sprychuk, 2020; Zakharova, & Stryukova, 1999).

Instead, the outlined method of semantic differential is practically not used in police organizations of different levels. Along with this, involving appropriate methods of diagnosing interpersonal relationships of police officers is taking place and gathering pace. This conclusion can be made based on the analysis of previous scientific researches (Aleksandrov, Okhrimenko, & Drozd, 2017; Barrett, Miguel, Hurd, Lueke, & Tan, 2003; Bondarenko et al., 2020; John, Naumann, & Soto, 2008; Okhrimenko, Yevdokimova, Shvets, Pakhomova, & Fediy, 2020; Ostapovich et al., 2020; Shvets et al., 2020; Valiev, Toshchovskiy, Pekurchuk, Sobakar, & Iermakov, 2019), which were based mainly on subjective questionnaires and self-assessment of respondents concerning their own behaviour or intentions.

Based on the semantic differential method, the results of our research expand our understanding of its capabilities in psychodiagnostic work among police officers. The involvement of this experimental method in the
sphere of police organizations functioning is distinguished by the fact that it deprives the subject of interest (police officer, candidate for police service, etc.) the opportunity to provide socially acceptable answers to certain questions or statements and thus falsify or distort the results of psychological tests at various stages.

6. Conclusions
The conducted research gives the right to show that the semantic differential gives a fairly objective picture of the police officers perception of their managers as colleagues. First of all, we are talking about a progressive trend in terms of activity and attitude. As the level of activity of the manager of a police organization increases, there is an increase in the attentive attitude towards him on the part of subordinate police officers. The potency and attitude indices are also positively correlated; i. e. an increase in the potency leads to an improvement in the manager’s attitude and improves the whole system of interpersonal interaction within the team of the police organization. That is why active use of this experimental method by practical psychologists is justified for the adequate construction of professional interaction and a favourable socio-psychological climate within police units.

The semantic differential allows to correctly diagnose, first of all, the manager’s communication strategy regarding the subordinate police personnel. Diagnosis provides a basis for comparing the behavioural characteristics of managers at different levels. Complete four-step mathematical data processing illustrates the mechanism underlying the interaction of managers with their subordinates.

Since the assessments of an individual obtained on the basis of this method are an indicator of his communicative peculiarities, the method of semantic differential makes it possible to directly determine the perception and attitude of the police officer towards the managers of his organization as a whole. The most obvious example is when a police officer is biased in giving negative or neutral assessments to all his managers.

The difficulty of the analysis through the method of semantic differential is that the assessment must be anonymous; only a special observation of a psychologist on the work of individual police officers allows identifying their individual perception. At the same time, the psychological diagnosis of the perception of police officers of their managers by this method will be useful for self-study and self-development of the subjects of communication, building a system of psychological support for police officers during their official activities.

Acknowledgements
There are no acknowledgements.

Funding
There was no outside funding provided for this study.

Disclosure statement
No author has any financial interest or received any financial benefit from this research.

Conflict of Interest
The authors declare that there are no conflicts of interest.

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