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Policy Brief

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From Workplace Anger to Problem Resolution: A Conceptual Approach with Implications for Uzbekistan's Civil Service

KEY MESSAGES

- Workplace anger can signal perceived unfairness, disrespect, or obstacles to getting work done. A constructive organisational response examines the concern and establishes what can be done about it.
- International research links prolonged rumination about anger-provoking events with greater depletion and poorer daily goal attainment. These findings support closer attention to how employees handle difficult experiences and obtain help.
- Uzbekistan's civil-service ethics rules, professional-development arrangements, and employee-representation mechanisms provide a practical foundation for testing an approach centred on problem resolution.
- A proposed 18-month civil-service pilot would connect professional support with managerial follow-up. Confidential access, protection against retaliation, and time for managers to respond would be conditions of implementation. Its effectiveness in Uzbekistan remains to be established.

ADDRESSING THE PROBLEM BEHIND THE ANGER

An employee receives incompatible instructions from two supervisors. Both tasks are urgent, each supervisor expects priority, and the employee is criticised when one deadline is missed. The employee becomes angry. Resolving the situation requires someone to clarify priorities, examine how the conflicting instructions arose, and agree how similar problems will be handled.

The same need for a response can arise when responsibilities are unclear, criticism feels humiliating, or a procedure repeatedly prevents someone from completing their work. In each case, anger may draw attention to a concern that deserves examination. The employee's account provides a starting point for checking the circumstances, understanding the different perspectives involved, and deciding what action is appropriate.

For managers, this creates an opportunity to connect employee well-being with everyday improvements in how work is organised. Support from colleagues can help an employee explain a difficulty. A clear organisational response can then establish responsibility, correct a problem where possible, or explain the reasons for a decision.

The civil service offers a practical setting in which to develop and test this approach through existing ethics, personnel, and training arrangements. The Agency for Governance Efficiency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, participating government bodies, HR units, ethics commissions, training providers, and employee representatives would each have a role in turning these arrangements into a workable process for employees.

Employees would be invited to raise work problems without having to identify themselves as angry. Anger is an emotional experience; mistreatment is an interpersonal event, and aggression is behaviour. Examining a concern should neither presume misconduct nor dismiss a legitimate problem because of the employee's emotional response.

WHY THIS ISSUE MATTERS FOR WORKPLACES IN UZBEKISTAN

The 2022 WIUT-UNFPA study surveyed 1,303 employees in 23 voluntarily participating private companies in Tashkent city and region. Eligible companies had at least 30 employees and included domestic and international businesses in construction, ICT, trade, manufacturing, accommodation and food services, education, and financial services. Employees self-selected through company-distributed questionnaires; 740 women and 563 men participated. [1, 15]

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Among women, 14.5% reported being shouted at and 12.2% being addressed rudely. Optional follow-up responses described stress, sleep disturbance, and work interference. The report states that men also reported adverse experiences, but its published incident analysis focuses on women and does not supply comparable male percentages for different behaviours. [1] These findings describe reported mistreatment, not measured anger, and cannot establish national or civil-service prevalence.

Mistreatment can become anger-provoking when interpreted as disrespect or unfairness; that link is a theoretical interpretation rather than a finding established by this survey. The local results support attention to treatment and reporting, while international research provides the evidence on anger-related coping discussed below.

Related concerns have already entered policy discussion. At a WHO-ILO workshop in Tashkent in April 2026, government representatives, employers' and workers' organisations, and health professionals considered violence and harassment affecting health workers. The discussion brought together reporting arrangements, protection against retaliation, training, and social dialogue as parts of a workplace response. [2]

Civil-service-specific context comes from the OECD's 2024 Public Governance Review, which identified weaknesses in communication within and between government departments, senior-level accountability, and HR capacity. [10] These are governance assessments, not estimates of anger or mistreatment. A reliable, comparable civil-service turnover rate was not identified in the sources reviewed. Participating institutions could provide anonymised exits, absence, and grievance data where available, distinguishing voluntary departures from retirement, transfers, and restructuring.

This focus also fits within Uzbekistan's wider interest in productivity and employment, reflected in the World Bank's Country Economic Memorandum. [9] The contribution would be specific: evidence about working practices that public institutions can realistically implement, afford, and evaluate. Any later extension to other employment settings could then account for differences in staffing, resources, and employment arrangements.

HIERARCHY AND CONFIDENCE IN RAISING CONCERNS

Channels and communication skills alone may be insufficient where employees anticipate retaliation, defer to seniority, or fear embarrassing themselves or a superior. The WIUT-UNFPA report records fear of job loss and shame among reasons for remaining silent. [1] These findings come from the participating private workplaces. They do not establish a single cultural profile for the civil service in Uzbekistan.

Power distance, meaning acceptance of unequal authority, and reliance on indirect, context-sensitive communication should therefore be considered possible constraints whose importance varies across institutions. International research associates team psychological safety with learning behaviour, reinforcing the relevance of interpersonal risk when employees question work practices. [11] Confidential consultation with staff at different grades would establish whether these concerns affect access locally.

Employees could first seek private advice, ask a representative to convey a concern, or use a confidential route outside their reporting line. Anonymous information could identify recurring problems, with its limits for investigating individual cases explained. Leaders would need to demonstrate that respectful criticism receives a fair response, and employees should never be required to confront a senior colleague or use informal dialogue before accessing formal procedures.

WHAT INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH TELLS US ABOUT WORKPLACE ANGER

International research helps explain why the response to a difficult workplace event deserves attention. A study of 2,376 US workers found that exposure to psychological aggression was associated with poorer job attitudes and health, which were linked to weaker task and contextual performance. [3] Respectful treatment therefore matters both to employees' experience of work and to their ability to contribute effectively.

The consequences of difficult events can also develop through less visible processes. A 2025 diary study of 214 employees, using German-language questionnaires, collected 1,611 daily observations over two working weeks. Rumination, meaning repeatedly dwelling on an anger-provoking event, was associated with greater reported depletion and lower goal attainment. [4]

The clearest practical lesson concerns this continued mental involvement in the event. An employee may return to a task while still replaying an exchange or thinking about an unresolved concern. Exploratory findings in the same study also suggested that employees' desire to belong to a workplace group shaped some relationships between coping and work outcomes. These observational findings

identify coping and social relationships as promising areas for further investigation. [4]

These associations support attention to respectful treatment, prolonged rumination, and the social conditions surrounding difficult events. They do not demonstrate that the proposed package will reduce distress or improve performance in Uzbekistan. The policy rationale rests on existing evidence; a future pilot would assess feasibility and local outcomes.

CONNECTING PROFESSIONAL SUPPORT WITH AN ORGANISATIONAL RESPONSE

The *Interaction Discrepancy Model* (*IDM*), a theoretical account of person-environment interactions, helps explain how this process could work. People interpret what happens in relation to what they expect or believe should happen. They assess the discrepancy, respond, and use subsequent feedback to judge whether the situation has changed. [5]

Applied to work, this places the organisational response within the employee's continuing experience of the problem. A clarification, correction, or reasoned explanation provides information about what happened and what the employee can expect next. Where further action is needed, an agreed responsibility and review date make the next step clear.

In practical terms, the model asks what is happening and what the employee believes should happen instead. The perceived gap may concern a clear priority, respectful treatment, or a fair procedure. The employee then considers whether the gap is harmful, who is responsible, and whether change is possible. These judgements help explain the emotional response. They do not establish that an allegation is correct or that the employee's preferred solution is feasible. [5]

The framework links each proposed activity to a stage of this process. Identifying recurring problems locates the perceived discrepancy; training and voluntary advice help employees describe it; an authorised decision-maker examines the issue; clarification, correction, or explanation supplies feedback; and follow-up checks whether the underlying difficulty remains. Support should help someone navigate this process without persuading them to accept mistreatment.

Professional support matters because employees may need help to describe this gap and choose a safe way to raise it. In the proposed approach, a colleague or adviser helps clarify the concern and the requested next step. The authorised manager or relevant body then checks the circumstances, considers different accounts, and decides what can be done. Clear explanations and a review date allow the employee to assess the response. If the difficulty persists, the concern returns for further consideration or appropriate escalation.

For conflicting instructions, for example, a colleague could help assemble the two requests, while a manager with authority agrees priorities and communicates the decision to both supervisors. The practical value lies in clarifying responsibility and changing the work situation where possible. Whether this also reduces rumination or distress is a proposition for evaluation, not an established effect of the framework. [5]

Figure 1 brings these links together. The immediate outcomes sought are clearer responsibilities, fair consideration, and documented progress on selected work problems. Reduced rumination, improved well-being, and fewer work delays are possible subsequent outcomes to test. Evaluation would also check whether staff feel safe using the arrangements and whether problems remain unresolved.

BUILDING ON EXISTING INSTITUTIONAL MECHANISMS IN UZBEKISTAN

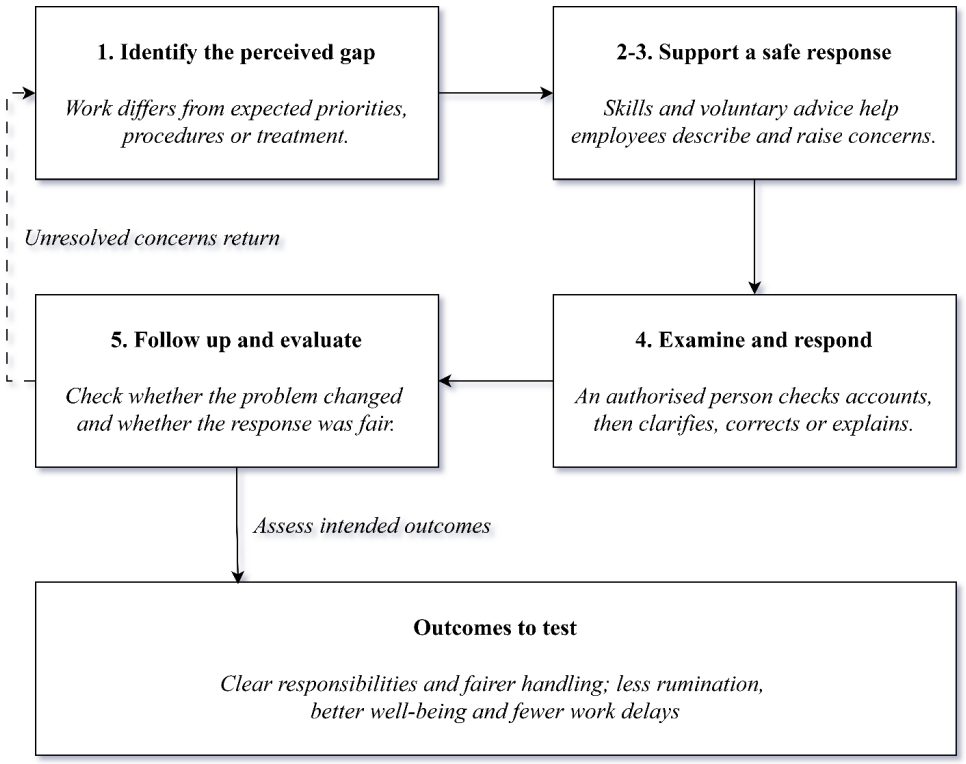
Uzbekistan's civil-service framework provides several routes through which this approach could be developed. Cabinet Resolution No. 595 of 14 October 2022 addresses professional conduct, constructive criticism, and non-retaliation for criticism. Its accompanying arrangements give ethics commissions preventive responsibilities and provide for cooperation with relevant unit heads and trade union committees. [6]

Professional-development arrangements provide a route for building the necessary skills. Presidential Decree No. DP-95 of 19 June 2025 provides for entry training and continuing development. It also provides for a "State Servant" mobile application through which employees can propose improvements and managers can respond. [7] Participating institutions could examine how these arrangements support practical dialogue and follow-up, while directing sensitive concerns through appropriate confidential procedures.

Employee representation provides a further basis for participation. The Labour Code recognises the labour collective and establishes arrangements for social partnership and representation. Its provisions apply to state civil servants insofar as the relevant matters are not regulated by the Law on State Civil Service. [8]

These provisions establish an institutional basis for considering the approach. They do not show

Figure 1. How the framework connects support with problem resolution



Source: Author's policy application of the Interaction Discrepancy Model [5]. Numbers refer to the five proposed activities. Arrows show proposed links to be tested. Voluntary access, confidentiality, protection against retaliation, and authority to act are conditions throughout.

that employees trust existing channels or that every institution can handle concerns effectively. Preparation would review actual access, decision-making authority, confidential handling, and escalation arrangements with employees and their representatives.

A PROPOSED POLICY APPROACH FOR UZBEKISTAN

Five connected activities are proposed for consideration by participating institutions. They draw on the evidence and reasoning above and would require employee input, clear responsibilities, and resources before implementation. The arrangements should be presented as workplace problem resolution and respectful management, with access open to all employees regardless of whether they report anger.

Identify recurring workplace problems

The starting point would be a focused assessment of difficulties that repeatedly affect employees or interfere with their work. These might include conflicting instructions, unclear responsibilities, uneven workloads, procedural delays, or disrespectful communication.

Confidential employee feedback could be considered alongside suitably anonymised information from existing HR, ethics, and employee-representation channels. The assessment should also identify effective practices, including how employees currently obtain advice and how managers successfully resolve concerns.

Each institution would select a manageable number of priorities, identify who has authority to act, and agree a review date. Matters requiring staffing, funding, or decisions elsewhere would be escalated. The assessment would also examine fear of retaliation, preferences for direct or mediated communication, and differences in access by grade, gender, and location, using confidential methods that protect small groups.

Develop practical skills for raising and responding to concerns

The problems identified during preparation would provide the basis for a short training module. The Academy of Public Policy and Administration under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan, participating institutions, and training providers could develop it within existing professional-development arrangements.

Employees would practise describing a con-

cern, explaining its effect on their work, and requesting a realistic next step. Managers would practise listening, checking different accounts, explaining decisions, and responding respectfully. A session on conflicting instructions, for example, could end with participants agreeing who should clarify priorities and how the decision should be communicated.

Practice would include private and representative-assisted ways of raising a concern, allowing employees to avoid public criticism of a superior. Managers would rehearse acknowledging disagreement without treating it as disloyalty or labelling the employee as difficult. Training would also cover pausing escalation, arranging a return to the issue, and recognising matters requiring formal investigation.

Follow-up would connect the training to actual experience. Participants could consider whether they had used the skills, what response they received, and what practical obstacles remained.

Make professional support accessible in everyday work

Employees would need opportunities to use these skills with appropriate support. Institutions could test a small number of arrangements, such as onboarding partners, mentoring, peer assistance with difficult tasks, or access to advice outside the immediate team.

Employees would choose whether to seek peer assistance and whom to approach, including an adviser outside the immediate team. A trusted colleague would offer practical help, not investigate complaints, mediate serious allegations, or report routine conversations to management. Conflicts of interest or links to a person involved would require referral to another adviser.

Support roles would require confidentiality training, minimal recording, and access restricted to authorised people. Before disclosure, employees would be told what can remain confidential and what may require referral under applicable duties or an immediate safety concern. Identifying information would be shared with consent wherever possible; any required disclosure would be explained. Small-team anonymity cannot be guaranteed, so advisers and evaluators would avoid identifiable anecdotes and suppress small reporting groups.

Access would be available during paid work and accommodate caring responsibilities, disability, and assignments away from the main office. Informal support would remain voluntary, alongside independent advice and formal procedures.

Strengthen response and follow-up through existing channels

Support would lead into a clear process for considering concerns. Each institution would review how matters move through supervisors, HR units, ethics commissions, trade union representatives, and other relevant mechanisms. Before launch, institutions would map responsibilities, referral duties, response periods, and record access against applicable law and institutional procedures. The pilot would supplement existing routes and would not restrict access to formal complaints or appeals. [6, 8]

Employees should know who will consider an issue, when to expect a response, and what options remain if it is unresolved. Internal response targets would need to reflect applicable procedural requirements and the complexity of the matter.

Where action is possible, the responsible person would explain what will change and check whether the change has addressed the problem. Where the requested action cannot be taken, the employee would receive a reasoned explanation and information about further review where appropriate.

Concerns involving a supervisor would have a designated route beyond that supervisor, with an alternative authorised reviewer where HR or another handler has a conflict of interest. Employees would receive information about further review and applicable external remedies. Under the pilot, a designated route outside the implicated reporting line would receive retaliation allegations, including exclusion, unfavourable assignments, or threats linked to raising a concern. Fair consideration and appropriate confidentiality would apply to all parties.

Line managers would need authority and capacity to respond. Institutional leaders would allocate paid time for case review, agree proportionate caseloads, and provide HR support for records and specialist investigations. Routine work problems could be resolved locally; complex misconduct allegations would go to the responsible body. Managers facing incompatible instructions or pressures from above would themselves have an escalation route and access to confidential advice.

Agreed management objectives could include timely acknowledgement, respectful handling, appropriate referral, and documented follow-up, incorporated into existing appraisal arrangements where permitted. Leaders would review these responsibilities alongside workload and authority. Complaint volume or low reported anger would not be performance targets, since rewarding low reporting could encourage suppression. Independent employee feedback would assess whether the response was fair and useful.

Table 1. Candidate evaluation instruments

Domain	Candidate instrument	Purpose
Mental well-being	World Health Organization-Five Well-Being Index (WHO-5) [12]	Five items on well-being over the previous two weeks; a broad outcome measure.
Work-related rumination	Work-Related Rumination Questionnaire [13]	Five-item affective rumination subscale; score separately from problem-solving pondering and detachment. It is not specific to anger.
Safety in raising concerns	Edmondson's team psychological safety scale [11]	Seven items on interpersonal risk and acceptance within a team; complement with questions about the available channels.
Fairness of response	Colquitt's organisational justice measure [14]	Procedural, interpersonal, and informational subscales to examine process, respectful treatment, and explanations.

Trade unions and employee representatives would participate in designing and reviewing these arrangements. Informal discussion would remain voluntary, with formal grievance, misconduct-reporting, and dispute-resolution procedures available whenever appropriate.

Evaluate employee experience and work outcomes together

Evaluation would follow the same process from the employee's first attempt to obtain help through to the response and its outcome. It would establish whether employees understand the arrangements, find them useful, and see progress on the issues they raise.

A short evaluation battery could draw on established instruments with validation evidence from other settings. These would serve as candidate measures and would still require adaptation and validation for the target civil service context. The final selection would reflect relevance, respondent burden, permissions, and local language testing.

Materials in Uzbek, English or Russian would undergo translation and independent back-translation, cognitive interviews, and preliminary checks of reliability and measurement structure. Each language version would receive equivalent checks. Anger, exposure to mistreatment, and aggressive conduct would be recorded separately; additional questions about support, retaliation, confidentiality, and access would be identified as locally developed items rather than validated scales.

Surveys could be collected at baseline and months 9, 15, and 18, using consistent recall periods. Confidential interviews would examine why employees used or avoided channels. Work indicators could include rework, processing delays, unresolved cases, and time spent handling concerns. Exit and absence records could add context where definitions and coverage are consistent; changes should not be attributed automatically to anger or the intervention.

Complaint numbers would be interpreted together with survey and interview findings. Increased reporting, for example, could reflect greater confidence in raising concerns, worsening conditions, or a combination of the two. Following cases through to their outcomes would help explain the pattern.

Individual research responses would remain separate from personnel decisions and be held by independent evaluators with restricted access and agreed retention periods. Managers would receive sufficiently aggregated findings, with small cells and identifying details removed. Employees would be able to decline research participation without losing access to support.

PROPOSED 18-MONTH CIVIL-SERVICE PILOT

The Agency for Governance Efficiency under the President of the Republic of Uzbekistan could coordinate the pilot with willing government bodies, employee representatives, and independent evaluators. Participation, responsibilities, and funding would be agreed before implementation.

An 18-month period would allow preparation, nine months of implementation, and six months to assess persistence and unintended effects. This is a practical planning option, not an empirically established optimal duration. Participation would include offices outside Tashkent and different functions where delivery and confidential evaluation are feasible.

Before launch, institutions would agree how to respond to the main implementation risks. Neutral problem-resolution language would reduce labelling; voluntary confidential access would address reluctance to speak directly; conflict-of-interest rules and restricted records would reduce disclosure risks; and paid time, HR support, and escalation would address managerial overload. Allegations of retaliation or serious confidentiality breaches would trigger prompt

Table 2. Proposed timeline for the 18-month pilot

Phase	Main activities	Proposed responsibility
Months 1 to 3	Consult employees and representatives; review channels and cultural barriers; establish baseline; adapt measures; agree paid time, budgets, confidentiality rules, escalation routes, and continuation criteria.	Coordinating authority, participating institutions, HR, ethics bodies, employee representatives, and independent evaluators.
Months 4 to 12	Deliver training and voluntary support; address selected problems; monitor responses, retaliation concerns, confidentiality breaches, and managerial workload; collect month 9 measures.	Institutional leaders, line managers, HR, ethics bodies, training providers, and employee representatives.
Months 13 to 18	Continue agreed arrangements; assess persistence at months 15 and 18; review costs, access, and unintended effects; recommend continuation, modification, or further testing.	Independent evaluators, coordinating authority, participating institutions, and employee representatives.

independent review and, where necessary, suspension of the affected arrangement while safeguards are restored.

Materials would be developed in Uzbek with local input and additional language versions where needed. The budget would include staff time, training, case handling, translation, secure data management, and independent evaluation. Institutional leaders would need to confirm these resources before inviting employees to use the arrangements.

Where enough teams or offices participate, the evaluation would include suitable comparison groups, with random allocation where feasible. Measures collected before and after implementation would be considered alongside changes in staffing, workload, technology, and organisational responsibilities. A smaller pilot would concentrate on feasibility, implementation quality, employee experience, costs, and preliminary outcome patterns.

Evaluation would ask whether employees can access support safely, whether selected work problems receive a fair response, how well-being and work indicators change, and whether the arrangements are affordable and accessible across employee groups. Interviews would examine stigma, fear of retaliation, confidentiality, pressure to settle informally, and pressures on managers throughout implementation.

Any decision after 18 months would consider implementation quality, sustained outcome patterns, affordability, and protection of employee rights. Reduced reporting alone would not demonstrate success. Expansion would depend on credible evidence and workable safeguards, with further testing where findings are inconclusive. Existing research justifies considering the proposal; future pilot findings would inform its continuation rather than serve as evidence for claims made in this brief.

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English descriptions of Uzbek legal provisions are paraphrases.

DISCLAIMER

The findings, interpretations, views, conclusions, and recommendations presented in this policy brief reflect the author's views and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Westminster International University in Tashkent or the Center for Policy Research and Outreach.

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