Article

Responsible leadership in a military organization (in the light of opinion surveys of professional soldiers)

Kazimierz Nagody-Mrozowicz[1,*], Piotr Pietrakowski[2]

[1] General Tadeusz Kościuszko Military University of Land Forces, 51-147 Wrocław, Poland
[2] WSB Merito University Opole, 45-372 Opole, Poland
* Corresponding author: Kazimierz Nagody-Mrozowicz, kazimierz.nagody-mrozowicz@awl.edu.pl

Abstract: Military leadership is currently an extremely popular and important aspect of managing human resources in difficult, changeable, and unpredictable conditions. The solutions used in modernly managed, well-organized, subsidized, and ethically militarized systems become a point of reference and a model for organizations that encounter perturbations in the management of the organization's human resources. The most important of them are certainly the sense of trust of subordinates in their superiors and the leaders' responsibility for the level of staff development. The aim of the research undertaken was to verify the thesis that can be formulated in this affirmative sentence: "A modern commander should be honorable, self-confident, and have the ability to influence his subordinates and shape friendly interpersonal contacts in the group he reports." The literature search in the field of leadership and questionnaire research were aimed at answering the main research question: "What mental properties and behavioural features should characterize a responsible leader in military organizations?". The work uses the diagnostic survey method, and the interview was conducted using a multi-factor survey questionnaire on a 30-person study group consisting of professional soldiers aged 25–40. The adopted age range of the study group corresponds to the period of active military service, from the age of graduation to the year of termination of active military service. The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire is composed of two scales, creating a total of 37 randomly ordered statements in the form of single-choice questions. To analyze the distribution of answers, ranks were used to assess the degree of their compliance with the respondents' beliefs. Based on the conclusions from the conducted research, we have grounds to believe that professional soldiers expect their leader to be helpful to his subordinates and to ensure that the soldiers are motivated to act and perform their tasks. An important behavior that is expected from the commander is the desire to have a common mission in achieving the goal. Based on the research results, it was found that an undesirable feature is the inconsistency of commanders when pointing out the mistakes of their subordinates, who do not devote interest and time to learning how to avoid mistakes and to improve the competence of their subordinates.

Keywords: leadership; trust; responsibility; psychophysical properties of a leader; military leadership

1. Introduction

The goals of the presented work include three threads. The theoretical goal is to present leadership issues. The research goal was to show the beliefs of professional soldiers about the properties and features of the leadership behaviors of their superiors. The practical goal is to verify the developed research tool, the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, in terms of its possible use in research relevant to the general population of professional soldiers in Poland.

The research is of a post-treatment nature, and the conclusions drawn from the research should be considered preliminary.

The rapidly growing uncertainty of the environment makes it necessary to radically change the approach to enterprise management as well as its "philosophy" defining the basic goals and principles of action of managers. People are the main entity of every organization and create its intellectual capital. Organizations managed by management staff can achieve the intended goals through the skillful use of this capital through proper management of people, consistent with modern management theories.

The challenges that the environment poses to the organization's members include the need to learn and acquire knowledge and competences. The direction of these changes is determined by the assumption that the condition for individual development is a continuous learning process. Thanks to learning, we transform ourselves and develop our creative abilities, and the effect of these processes is an increase in self-awareness and a change in our perception of reality.

To function effectively, every organization needs both management and leadership (Goleman, 2002). Leadership is an essential condition for enabling change, and management is an essential means of achieving systematic results. Management in connection with leadership can create systematic changes, and leadership in connection with management allows maintaining the appropriate level of compliance between the individual and its environment. The signs of excellent leadership manifest themselves mainly among the crowds of a given leader's followers, and the very essence of leadership comes down to a deep understanding of the idea of obligations to the institution and the way of thinking about its heirs (Kenney, 2000). Leadership, exemplified in some form of behaviour, such as facial expression, body position, tone of voice, body posture, semantic content, phonetic form, hierarchical relationship, etc., is a social role within which a specific attitude is presented (Nagody-Mrozowicz, 2022).

Organizational units (among others: companies, enterprises, corporations, institutions, associations, etc.), just like the people who create them, are always at the stage of becoming, i.e., creating some relationships and structures. Covenants and agreements hold people together and enable them to meet organizational needs. These values should be universally understood and accepted, and as such, they should shape individual attitudes as well as organizational behavior. Leaders are obliged to provide organizations with maturity expressed in a sense of self-worth, belonging, hope, responsibility for themselves and for others, as well as a sense of equality and justice.

The true meaning of leadership comes down to leading others by your example, even if you do not exercise formal organizational authority. We can talk about true leadership when people are free and equal and not influenced by influence or persuasion. Natural leaders do not have to use formalized power towards their subordinates but rather treat them as partners involved in the implementation of a common project (Bartkowiak and Januszek, 2009).

Ethical leadership of people enjoys a high degree of permanence and is viable management, independent of potential conditions and processes, giving satisfaction from the relationship with superiors and satisfying the need for respect and

recognition. Employee attitudes formed under the influence of forbearance and goodness do not easily degenerate, and the motivation to act is characterized by incredible durability and strength. Work is done honestly, reliably, and with commitment, even in situations of financial underinvestment. This is because the dominant factors of motivation are activated social needs, including belonging to a group, interpersonal relations, perceived recognition, and respect. Realistically, then the costs of labor and business decrease, absenteeism decreases, productivity increases, and human capital develops, stimulating the growth of the organization's income (Nagody-Mrozowicz, 2022).

2. Materials and methods

The work uses the diagnostic survey method, and in the interview was conducted using a multi-factor survey questionnaire on a 30-person study group consisting of professional soldiers aged 25–40. The soldiers included in the study had various levels of education, the largest group were soldiers with secondary education—45%, then soldiers with vocational education—33%, and finally soldiers with higher education—22%.

The Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire is composed of two scales, creating a total of 37 randomly ordered statements in the form of single-choice questions. To analyze the distribution of answers, ranks were used to assess the degree of their compliance with the respondents' beliefs: 0—never, 1—rarely, 2—sometimes, 3—often, 4—very often, corresponding to the weights: 0, 1, 2, 3, 4. The quantity of responses is multiplied by a given weight to obtain the final weighted value. A diagnostic scale focused on the analysis of leadership (11 questions: 5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24) was incorporated into a control scale (26 questions), the aim of which was to direct the respondents' attention to real and general issues of power and management in organizations. The adopted research tactic was intended to redirect the respondents' attention from leadership to general management issues, so that the respondents would not be influenced by social assessments of leadership in their answers. Due to limited space, only the questions of the diagnostic scale will be quoted, especially since they were intended to show the respondents' beliefs about leadership (the digits corresponds order to the order of the theorems: 5, 6, 15, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, 24):

- "He can solve problems that arise between people.
- He finds joy in being among others.
- Others believe he is controlling his ego.
- Has a high enough level of motivation.
- He is always looking for ways to resolve a conflict in which both sides win.
- He is the last person I would describe as desperate.
- Even though he is impatient in waiting for positive results, he does not allow it to have a negative impact on his surroundings.
- Others trust him.
- He is appropriately confident, but not arrogant.
- He is sensitive to the feelings of others.

- He can listen well"[1].

Confirming answers are diagnostic answers and are given weights from 0 to 4 (see **Table 1**).

Table 1. Preferred and expected leadership behaviours.

No	No in the survey	Claims about the properties of leadership	0: Never Weight 0	1: Rarely Weight 1	2: Sometimes Weight 2	3: Often Weight 3	4: Very often Weight 4	Rank
1.	22	He is appropriately confident, but not arrogant	3/0	3/3	9/18	9/27	6/24	I
2.	15	Others believe he is controlling his ego	2/0	3/3	9/18	13/39	3/12	II
3.	17	Has a high enough level of motivation	2/0	5/5	6/12	14/42	3/12	III
4.	6	He finds joy in being among others	4/0	4/4	7/14	10/30	5/20	IV
5.	19	He is the last person I would describe as desperate	3/0	6/6	10/20	5/15	6/24	V
6.	21	Others trust him	5/0	6/6	4/8	11/33	4/16	VI
7.	23	He is sensitive to the feelings of others	3/0	8/8	7/14	7/21	5/20	VI
8.	24	He can listen well	5/0	4/4	9/18	7/21	5/20	VI
9.	5	He can solve problems that arise between people	3/0	4/4	14/28	7/21	2/8	VII
10.	20	Even though he is impatient in waiting for positive results, he does not allow it to have a negative impact on his surroundings	4/0	4/4	13/26	6/18	3/12	VIII
11.	18	He is always looking for ways to resolve a conflict in which both sides win	3/0	11/11	8/16	5/15	3/12	IX

3. Results

As a result of the research conducted, several interesting conclusions can be drawn (**Table 1**). Each sentence describes an important aspect of leadership. The level of significance of the proposed terms was expressed in the opinions of the study group on a scale from 0 to 4, which means that the more important feature in the opinion of the respondents will achieve a higher final value. It is created as a quotient of the rank and the number of indications of a given statement. The method used to calculate the results of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire allows for quick and simple interpretation of the data.

The table columns provide the number of diagnostic responses and their weighted value along with the rank. The table columns provide the number of diagnostic responses and their weighted value along with the rank. The five most important ranks are marked with Roman numerals

The obtained research results are as follows (compare **Table 1**).

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[1] Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire.

According to professional soldiers from the study group, the most important, preferred and expected leadership behaviours are:

- Rank 1: "Others believe he is controlling his ego"— the leader is perceived as a self-confident person, with high self-control, self-efficacy, and a sense of trust in one's own competences;

- Rank 2: "He is appropriately confident, but not arrogant"—the leader's self-confidence is not aggressive, not overwhelming and degrading towards subordinates, but full of kindness, empathy and understanding;

- Rank 3: "Has a high enough level of motivation"—his level of motivation is adequate to the degree of difficulty of work tasks, commitment has an activating effect on subordinates, but does not depress them or dim their energy;

- Rank 4: "He finds joy in being among others"—subordinates feel happy that he derives pleasure and satisfaction from being among them, the leader, through his presence among his subordinates, strengthens interpersonal bonds and the sense of community;

- Rank 5: "He is the last person I would describe as desperate"—subordinates want to see him as a rock, self-controlled, resistant to overload stress, not prone to panic.

Other properties and features of leadership behaviors do not seem particularly important to respondents. However, it should be remembered that the undertaken research was of a pilot nature and the conclusions drawn from it should be treated as preliminary. They are, in a sense, secondary to the primary characteristics, which are considered to be those with ranks from one. to five. Of course, such a classification is arbitrary and conventional, but it allows a clearer observation of potential trends in group social opinions on the leadership role.

4. Discussion

The main approach to the concept of leadership in the 1940s and 1950s focused mainly on identifying the characteristics that provide exceptional managerial abilities. In this approach, leadership is an innate trait, not a result of socialization or learning. This approach re-emerged in the 1980s in the form of top management theory, leading to a series of studies that attempted, with varying degrees of success, to examine the relationship of top management characteristics to variables such as consensus as well as effectiveness. Another point of reference in leadership research is the organization's environment expressed in the strategic approach, the so-called strategic leadership (Griffin, 2000).

Another trend in leadership research in the 1950s and 1960s was the focus on behaviors, the so-called collective setting (Leavitt, 1965). These studies attempt to link general leadership behaviors or styles to the level of teamwork effectiveness and job satisfaction. These studies suggested that leaders with high levels of prudence, calm, and self-control achieve the greatest effectiveness. In order to better understand and explain the differences in the impact of various leadership behaviors, some researchers have tried to take into account the impact of various situational as well as contextual factors, which over time has led to the development of a complex set of leadership

effectiveness models, such as: path-goal theory, cognitive theories, leader exchange theory.

In the 1980s, a new approach to leadership emerged in which the leader is someone who defines organizational reality by articulating a vision that reflects the organization's mission as well as the values that will support it (Koontz et al., 1989; Nagody-Mrozowicz, 2021). Therefore, this new view of leadership distinguishes a leader with charisma (French and Raven, 1959).

In the last decade of the 20th century, alternative leadership concepts emerged, e.g., distributed leadership. This leadership is characterized by its emphasis on how leadership emerges in a specific social or organizational environment based on interactions between multiple stakeholder groups and the capabilities of leaders (Alvesson, 2012). Leadership in this concept is not an attribute of an individual, but of a collective in which individuals negotiate their position in relation to others in a less predictable way than a rational approach in the organization would suggest (John, 2002).

A modern leader mainly inspires and animates the necessary actions of subordinates. This is not a person who tries to replace subordinates in their duties, or even personally perform the most important work. On the contrary, the leader prefers and appreciates the competence, commitment, independence and responsibility of colleagues. The leader leads the group to success, but success comes from the group (Oleksyn, 2007).

"No social unit can be restricted by its regulations so strictly that it functions like an automatic machine at the touch of a button. This would be far from the ideal of human society, composed of rational and free individuals who, through their spontaneous activity, should contribute to the common good. It is this spontaneous activity of subordinates that the superior is supposed to direct by means of orders and admonitions, and it is now necessary to consider how he should carry it out" (Woroniecki, 2016).

5. Conclusion

Based on the conclusions from the conducted research, we have grounds to believe that professional soldiers expect their leader to be helpful to their subordinates and to ensure that the soldiers are motivated to act and perform their tasks. An important behavior that is expected from the commander is the desire to have a common mission in achieving the goal. Based on the research results, it was found that an undesirable feature is the inconsistency of commanders when pointing out the mistakes of their subordinates, who do not devote interest and time to learning how to avoid mistakes and to improve the competence of their subordinates. Superiors often demonstrate their power and self-confidence, but this is merely an application of formal authority. According to the respondents, a commander with leadership qualities takes care of the good of his group in such a way that a common group goal is achieved.

In light of the obtained research results, several implications and recommendations can be formulated for the process of developing the properties and features of responsible leadership:

- looking for new solutions while performing tasks,
- proper distribution of tasks and functions among subordinates,
- taking action before the situation turns bad,
- motivating action and giving praise to subordinates as a result of the correct performance of the task,
- frequent presentation of a vision of the future in an optimistic way,
- instilling a sense of pride in subordinates and increasing self-esteem,
- before setting a task, informing them about its purposefulness.

Leadership should be aimed at reducing stress factors and fear (Bugdol et al., 2021), as well as at creating conditions conducive to developing attitudes of courage in both superiors and subordinates. Responsible leadership is a relationship of mutual trust between group members in which they play complementary roles of leader and follower.

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