

MISSIONS EXPERIENCE - FACTOR FOR MILITARY LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

Dimitrov D.R. PhD.,

Land Forces Faculty – Vasil Levski National Military University, Veliko Tarnovo, Bulgaria
dimitrov.nvu@gmail.com

Abstract: Participation in missions abroad is considered a kind of military career achievement other than military routine and familiar surroundings, which is straining both personal qualities and professional skills. This report presents a comparative analysis between participated and not participated in missions, officers, sergeants and soldiers, and how it has influenced their leadership development.

Keywords: LEADERSHIP, MISSIONS ABROAD, PERSONAL QUALITIES, PROFESSIONAL SKILLS

1. Introduction

A specific and particularly important type of human activity in all times is warfare. As along our history, war work has particular importance to society today. However, the objective conditions for warfare in our country have changed radically in recent years. Moving fully to a professional army, taking responsibility for our NATO and EU partners, completing a new type of tasks such as taking part in missions abroad in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, and others, set new requirements for the Bulgarian officers as military leaders. Nevertheless, professionalism remains one of the main factors guaranteeing the high quality of performance of the war activity.

The professionalism of the officer is a complex psychological state, primarily conditioned by the factor "danger" as a necessary component in the performance of official duty, both in peacetime and in wartime. According to the experts, the professionalism in the field of dangerous professions, to which the profession of officer is concerned, is a category of human existence, which is a complex systemic set of personal, business, professional and moral qualities of a man.

The moral dilemmas that leader confronts and resolves are the core of his professionalism. [2]

The foundations of professionalism in the field of dangerous professions are:

- taking responsibility for each individual decision;
- exceptional organization;
- personal manfulness;
- self-criticism;
- socially meaningful motives of thoughts and actions.

Today, when talking about the professionalism of military man, his experience as a military leader, especially when performing tasks in extreme environments, participation in missions abroad or the so-called Martial Operations is particularly important. Participation in missions abroad is considered a peculiar achievement in the military career, different from the military routine and the familiar environment, which tests both the personal qualities and the professional competencies of the servicemen. [1]

The subject of research in this report is the impact of the participation in missions abroad on the leadership of the military personnel.

The object of research are military servicemen from Bulgarian military unit and cadets from Vasil Levski National Military University (all 434 soldiers, sergeants, officers and cadets).

The purpose of the study is to analyze the influence of experience in missions as a factor for leadership building, on the professional-leadership activity of the servicemen.

2. Basis of the research and used methods.

Three different self-assessment tests are used, completed by cadets, officers and sergeants. Two of the tests are intended to be completed by the soldiers as an assessment of their direct commanders, with the aim of obtaining an assessment and self-assessment on the same scales, which will provide a basis for detailed analysis of the results. The test methods used are:

- T-P test - presents the leader's orientation to the task or to the people. Cadets, officers and sergeants fill it as a self-assessment.

The soldiers fill it twice, once as an assessment of their direct commander-sergeant and second time as an assessment of their direct commander-officer. [5]

- Test "Discussion Leader" - a methodology for exploring the functions of the discussion leader in organizing group decision-making. It is filled as a self-assessment of cadets, officers and sergeants and as soldiers' assessment of their commander-officer. [4]

- Impact Test - gives information about one of the leader's core qualities, namely his ability to influence others. Only cadets, officers and sergeants fill it. [5]

Statistical methods are used to process the results of all tests, including: scale reliability analysis by calculating Cronbach's alpha, correlation analysis, linear discriminative analysis, factor analysis and comparative analysis using Student and Fisher's tests. [3].

3. Results and discussions.

Table 1 presents a sample of the comparative analysis of the groups of officers and sergeants participated and not participated in missions, on all scales of all tests by showing only the test units with high significance.

Table 1. Comparison by the Student's test among the groups of participated and not participated in mission officers and sergeants.

	On average Participated in missions	On average Not participated in missions	t(83)	p
I'm in stress of being the head of the group	0.000	0.091	-2.253	0.027
I fight against any freedom of action	0.500	0.697	-1.804	0.075
I leave the group to take the initiative	0.115	0.273	-1.871	0.065
I require the group to adhere to rules and mechanisms	0.000	0.061	-1.810	0.074
I agree with the opinions and seek compromises.	3.827	3.485	1.876	0.064
I give pace of work setting up problems and goals.	4.115	3.697	2.325	0.023
I direct and organize the discussion.	4.385	3.970	2.524	0.014
I periodically summarize	4.231	3.788	2.545	0.013
I maintain trust and openness	4.769	4.424	2.525	0.013
I appreciate compatibility of the decision with group goals and standards	4.423	3.909	3.269	0.002
I support solving the conflicts in the group	4.769	4.515	1.984	0.051

Are you annoyed by people who dress and behave extravagantly?	0.077	0.273	-2.505	0.014
Scale "Work function"	43.115	40.303	2.651	0.010
Scale "Support function"	43.923	41.636	2.241	0.028

When analyzing the results of the table, it is clear that the category of military involved in missions (63% of the respondents) are distinguished by greater organization, focus and dynamics in performing tasks and achieving goals compared to their non-participated in missions colleagues. Participated in missions military assess whether the decision made is compatible with group goals and standards. This involves reconciling opinions, seeking compromises and helping to resolve conflicts, as well as maintaining trust and openness in interpersonal relationships.

At the same time, the table shows that mission participants experience less stress as representatives of the group than non-participants, which is a sign for their adequate mental readiness and a clear understanding of their role as leaders. In addition, mission participants show restraint in terms of delegation of rights and giving freedom to subordinates to take an initiative. All these for the mission conditions are supposed to be due to the specificity of high-risk performed tasks, where the one at the beginning is manifested in a higher degree and there is no possibility of self-deception and improvisation.

A linear discriminant analysis is used to determine a set of indicators that distinguished the group of participated in missions and still not participated. The sample consists of 60 sergeants and 25 officers.

The discriminant analysis using the "Forward Stepwise" method gives the following table.

Table 2. Table of predicted cases of discriminant analysis.

	Coincidences, %	Predicted as not participated in missions	Predicted as participated in missions
Not participated in missions	100	33	0
Participated in missions	98	1	51

The data in the table shows that the set of variables contains enough prognostic information to distinguish between the two categories of participated and not participated in missions. The model uses the following variables listed in table 3.

Table 3. Variables in Linear Discrimination Analysis Model.

	Wilks' - Lambda	F(1,55)	p
I appreciate the compatibility of the decision with the group goals and standards	0.272	0.198	0.658
I require the group to adhere to rules and mechanisms	0.272	0.175	0.677
I leave the group to take the initiative	0.396	25.387	0.000
I require members of the group to work hard	0.398	25.822	0.000
I direct and organize the discussion	0.350	16.003	0.000
I diagnose why the group has difficulty	0.350	16.065	0.000
I fight against any freedom of action	0.369	19.947	0.000
I urge the group to improve its previous achievement	0.313	8.617	0.005
I coordinate members' efforts	0.341	14.182	0.000

I appreciate and regulate the emotional climate	0.315	9.000	0.004
I convince others that my ideas are in their favor	0.288	3.533	0.065
I would bring back those who were fired before	0.289	3.616	0.062
I allow some members to have power equal to mine	0.325	10.949	0.002
I give my people total freedom of action	0.298	5.591	0.022
I'm talking about the group if there's a visit	0.303	6.584	0.013
I periodically summarize	0.309	7.827	0.007
I assign to the group members individual tasks	0.335	12.953	0.001
I test the suitability of the solution	0.304	6.715	0.012
I listen with interest	0.288	3.478	0.068
I take down the tension in the group	0.297	5.246	0.026
I speak as a representative of the group	0.323	10.610	0.002
I most like to be a group spokesman	0.307	7.364	0.009
I support communication and mutual understanding	0.293	4.455	0.039
I analyze the failures in details	0.276	1.111	0.296
I represent the group on external events	0.282	2.346	0.131
I stimulate high-quality work	0.279	1.607	0.210
I act without any consultation with the group	0.280	1.886	0.175
I work hard for promotion	0.279	1.699	0.198
I try to keep up with the fast pace of work	0.278	1.375	0.246

The model includes 29 variables having practically the same discriminatory power as the initial set of 56 variables. They are subjected to a factor analysis, which defines three factors. A sample of the factor analysis is presented in Table 4 and only the high weight variables defining three factors are presented.

Table 4. Factor weights of variables in the model of discriminant analysis

	F1	F2	F3
I require members of the group to work hard	0.201	0.855	0.095
I direct and organize the discussion	0.621	0.302	0.085
I diagnose why the group has difficulty	0.704	0.184	0.132
I urge the group to improve its previous achievement	0.195	0.757	0.182
I coordinate members' efforts	0.667	0.265	0.295
I appreciate and regulate the emotional climate	0.877	0.200	0.068
I convince others that my ideas are in their favor	0.001	0.435	0.528
I'm talking about the group if there's a visit	0.217	0.160	0.661
I periodically summarize	0.679	0.288	0.147
I assign to the group members individual tasks	0.249	0.563	0.028
I test the suitability of the solution	0.467	0.120	0.233
I listen with interest	0.530	-0.008	0.041
I take down the tension in the group	0.711	0.282	0.003
I support communication and mutual understanding	0.644	0.044	0.021

I stimulate high-quality work	0.559	0.507	0.016
I act without any consultation with the group	0.094	0.127	-0.501
I try to keep up with the fast pace of work	0.226	0.586	0.208

The first factor (**F1**) has the main indicators: "I direct and organize the discussion", "I diagnose why the group has difficulty", "I coordinate members' efforts", "I appreciate and regulate the emotional climate", "I take down the tension in the group", "I support communication and mutual understanding and "I stimulate high-quality work". Therefore, we can name this factor "**Diagnosis, Control and Coordination**".

The second factor (**F2**) has the main indicators: "I require members of the group to work hard", "I urge the group to improve its previous achievement", "I assign to the group members individual tasks", "I stimulate high-quality work" and "I try to keep up with the fast pace of work", so we can name it "**Group work organization**".

The third factor (**F3**) has the main indicators: "I convince others that my ideas are in their favor", "I'm talking about the group if there is a visit", "I act without any consultation with the group"(negative association), so we can name it "**Public encouragement of group achievement**".

The results of the Student's test comparisons of the identified factors are presented in the following table.

Table 5. Student and Fisher's test results

	Student's test				Fisher's test			
	On average Participated In missions	On average Not Participated In missions	t(83)	p	SD Participated In missions	SD Not Participated In missions	F (51,32)	p
F1	0.156	-0.246	1.931	0.057	0.903	0.983	1.184	0.579
F2	-0.081	0.127	-1.012	0.314	0.970	0.838	1.340	0.381
F3	0.092	-0.145	1.258	0.212	0.893	0.770	1.344	0.376

The last table shows that the military men participated in missions (compared to not participated) have a significantly higher average level of the factor "Diagnosis, Control and Coordination" [$t(83) = 1.931$; $P = 0.057$]. There is no significant difference in "Group work organization" [$t(83) = 1.012$; $P = 0.314$] as well as in "Public encouragement of group achievement" [$t(83) = 1.258$; $P = 0.212$].

Therefore, participation in missions has led to improvements in the functional condition of the officers and sergeants as leaders and military professionals.

4. Conclusion.

The analysis of the data from the conducted research shows that the participation in missions abroad highly contributes to enhance the professional experience of the servicemen. The experience in missions emerged as a key factor for leadership development of the military leader. Participated in missions leaders are distinguished as better motivators, they are more successful in conflict management, they show more concern about relationships among their subordinates, they are more balanced and cold-blooded when performing tasks in extreme situations.

All this provoke increased demands on the preparation and improvement of military leaders. On the one hand, everyone should have equal rights and chances for selection and participation in missions, on the other hand, it is almost impossible for any military leader to go through a post in mission abroad, especially since the

participation in a mission abroad depends only on personal choice and desire of the servicemen.

Therefore, efforts should be directed to the preparation of military leaders, particular in:

- mastering the competences of the leader-commander;
- concentrating, distributing and retaining attention, developing professional memory and thinking in the process of preparation for the activity;
- mental modeling of different management conditions and identification of the successful model of activity;
- maintaining a high level of endurance, mental resilience, reliability and opportunity for intellectual activity;
- increased self-control of own actions and actions of subordinates;
- rapid and adequate assessment of the environment, hazards and conditions of activity;
- making the right decision;
- opportunity for verbal influence to subordinates to prevent inadequate actions in a complex environment.

More generally understood from the point of view of followers (subordinates), efforts must be directed to:

- increase the productivity of the group activity at a reduced error level;
- increasing the level of satisfaction with the group's activities and relationships;
- formation of situational activity manifested as the ability of the functional group to be placed above the level of the requirements of the situation.

The solution of these tasks should be directed at diagnosing the activities of the leader and the staff at all stages of the preparation and in the course of the practical work itself, realizing the values of the person and the goals of the professional activity, acquiring knowledge, skills and habits for managerial activity in complex conditions.

The algorithm for the preparation of effective leaders should take into account the following circumstances:

- leadership reporting in all occupations, which means understanding, assessing and using management skills in the course of the activity;
- a predominant orientation towards working with the unit but using an individual approach to the individual members of its staff;
- a differentiated approach and taking into account the specificity of training cadets as commanders, as well as the preparation of functional groups;
- use of specially designed and selected in view of the specifics of the individual specializations of cadets and cadets training and exercises.

Private criteria for the application of this algorithm can be:

- the professionalism of the group to be assessed, the speed and regularity of the performance of the tasks assigned and the amount of errors committed in the course of carrying out those tasks;
- satisfaction with the relations and activities in the functional group in terms of the established group cohesion contributing to the solving of the tasks.

As a summary measure for assessing the leadership qualities of future leaders is their preparedness to fulfill the obligations that must be assessed in real management conditions.

Therefore, attention should be focused on the planning, preparation and conducting realistic trainings that are as close as possible to the conditions and nature of the tasks performed during a mission.

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