

Original article

A study on a charismatic leader in a tactical military organization

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ABSTRACT

Satisfying functional requirements of military leadership becomes possible by taking into account specific factors defining the basic instances of a military organization, force generation/regeneration and the conduct of military operations. Major differences are plausible in the plan of effective exercise of leadership in all of the instances. These, noticed and identified, may be recovered from formative plans of training and development processes aimed at improving skills of military leaders.

KEYWORDS

military leadership, charismatic leadership, psychological profile, military leader



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1. Introduction

The peculiarities of the military environment or a military organization especially when it is engaged in operation put on a striking mark on the specificities of leadership, emphasizing the fact that leadership skills cannot be randomly acquired, but based on defined criteria for an authentic commander as well and as for a military leader's personality.

The profile of a military leader meets peculiar personality traits being specific in particular to a commander especially when assigning him/her a leading position. One may therefore notice features such as charisma, emotional intelligence, empathy, profes-

sional competence (in the military specialty), ability to lead people and organizations, a high degree of activism, dominance, confidentiality, originality as well as sociability, responsibility and adaptability. Charisma combines a number of personality features essential for all the military personnel, not just for leaders: optimism, adaptability, reliability, communication skills, sociability and emotional intelligence as well. The set of interdependent and interfering skills, as well as each skill taken separately, express and are completed in three key stages of a military person's action and the existence according to the "BE-KNOW-DO". "BE-KNOW-DO" embodies the commander's personality, which is considered to be a result of several factors, where a family, school and society play an important role.

In this context, "the view is increasingly necessary according to which personality, with all its components must be assessed in relation to the tasks that the military people have to perform." At the same time, "it is undeniable that the leader's personality is an important management factor, but it must be seen as a result of psycho-individual qualities and certain specific role requirements with different degrees of structuring." Each soldier has leadership potential and "the potential of charisma is a skill that we all have, a component that can be developed and characterized by concentration, judgment, action, results, influence, sensitivity, motivation and affirmation."

Actions taken by a military organization in theatres of operation differ from those carried out in peacetime, and the conditions in which soldiers operate (fatigue, combat stress, environmental conditions) cause additional difficulties to the military personnel during missions being executed.

2. Theoretical premises

A charismatic leader is a kind of a leader who can best perform the task of making subordinates adapt to specific requirements in terms of personality traits that he/she possesses. Not less important is the fact that this adaptation not only depends on a leader but also on subordinates' personalities. Thus, "according to data resulting from the analysis of personality traits, a possible psychological portrait of an easy-adaptable soldier may be drawn, which includes mainly the following features: ambition, dominance, optimism, responsibility, self-confidence, resourcefulness, independence, tolerance, sociability, competence, intelligence, spontaneity, humor, unconventionality, a sense of adventure, communication abilities, work efficiency, loyalty, tolerance, moderation and altruism". On the other hand, the personality profile of a heavy-adaptable military "would mainly include the following features: pessimism, shyness, dissatisfaction, intolerance, irritability, superficiality, clumsiness, laziness, ignorance, pride and egotism".

Reverting to a charismatic leader, he/she has the ability to help soldiers pass easier this adjustment period and in parallel provide support in their attempt to combat stress agents of the operational environment. He/She has personality characteristics through which he/she ensures the cohesion of the subunit he/she is leading. These features include adaptability, optimism, sociability, communication skills and traits that have been outlined above, belonging simultaneously to the personality profile of a ver-

satile military. A charismatic military leader inspires trust, sets a personal example and has courage, all that makes him/her able to ensure that the subordinate military staff overcome fears arising at work.

The charismatic leadership theory emphasizes the effects it has on the subunit. Thus, the following may be mentioned: "subordinates' confidence in the fairness of the leader's beliefs; similarity of their convictions with their leader's convictions; his/her indisputable acceptance; affection for the leader and identification with him/her; voluntary obedience; emulation; emotional involvement in mission performed; high goals."

As it is clearly seen from the above-mentioned effects, a charismatic leader has the power to bring his/her subordinates closer to him/her and make them trust the beliefs he/she has.

In spite of a particularly large number of stressor factors in theatres of operation, these can be attenuated or defeated by military personnel both through the support provided by the leader and through their will to resist them. The charismatic leader has the personality traits necessary to help soldiers in their approach to adapt themselves to existing conditions and eliminate stressors. The typology of a charismatic leader's traits that one should possess in such an environment is one of the most complete.

3. Objectives and hypotheses of the research

Charisma can be defined as the ability to arouse enthusiasm in people around. A charismatic leader is able to obtain strong loyalty and commitment from subordinates. He/She is able to know his/her subordinates very well owing to the fact that they consider him/her as a very close person, not only as a superior but also as a friend.

Charisma is a social relationship of assignment, and hence the result of the social perception. It is appropriate to assume that there are major differences between the perception of soldiers participating in missions in war theatres and those serving exclusively in military structures during peacetime

For the above reasons the authors have adopted the objective of shaping the charismatic leader's profile by comparing indicators defining a charismatic leader in the multinational theatre of operations and those defining a charismatic leader during peacetime in order to determine the differences between psychological profiles of the two types and also to highlight the personality traits that a charismatic military leader should have. To this end, the authors have considered the below as necessary and useful:

- outlining the charismatic leader's personality profile from the perspective of soldiers who have participated in multinational theatres of operation;
- outlining the charismatic leader's personality profile from the perspective of soldiers who have not participated in multinational theatres of operation;
- identifying differences between the charismatic leader's personality profiles obtained from the two above categories of soldiers;

- identifying personality traits defining a charismatic leader, both in the view of soldiers who have and those who have not participated in multinational theatres of operation.

The research hypotheses have been expressed by the following statements:

- the military personnel that have participated in multinational theatres of operation will choose such charismatic leader's defining features, which show that he/she inspires trust and confidence and is ready to take the lead in armed conflict situations;
- the military personnel that have participated in multinational theatres of operation will choose such charismatic leader's defining features, which describe him/her as a sociable and pleasant person in his/her relationship with others.

4. Research methodology

The research was conducted on a sample of 60 soldiers, 30 of whom had participated and the others had not participated in multinational theatres of operation.

The authors used the qualitative method and the main tool was a questionnaire consisting of closed factual questions that allow for obtaining opinions on factors shaping charismatic leader's personality profile. There was a set of 30 personality characteristics structured so as to include temperamental traits, aptitude and character traits; the military personnel was to indicate the extent to which each of the 30 traits is defining a charismatic leader on a scale from 1 to 10. Alphabetically ordered in the questionnaire, personality traits can be divided into two distinct categories.

The first category includes personality traits of a charismatic leader showing that he/she inspires trust and confidence as well as his/her readiness to take the lead in armed conflict situations: excellent leadership skills, versatile, good speaker, good organizer, concentration, credible, very good military knowledge, courageous, inspiring confidence, motivation, providing personal example, professional, responsible, vigilant and vision;

In the second category there are the personality traits of a charismatic leader that describe him/her as a sociable and enjoyable person in the relationships with his/her subordinates: active, good listener, willingness, cooperative, creative, empathetic, extroverted, intelligent, emotional intelligence, good memory, optimistic, persuasive, punctual, respectful and sociable.

5. Data processing and interpretation

The first step was interpreting the questionnaire data related to shaping the psychological profile of a charismatic military leader obtained from soldiers who had participated in multinational operations. Based on the received psychological profile, the identification of personality traits defining a charismatic military leader in the eyes of soldiers who were part of the aforementioned category was performed. He/She is de-

scribed as a person, who *inspires confidence, offers personal example* and who also *has very good leadership skills*. Not less important are such features as *good speaker, versatile, reliable, courageous, responsible*, all these traits largely outline the psychological profile of this type of a leader. Features such as *emotional intelligence, good organizer* and *good military knowledge* complement the psychological profile.

One may thus notice the emphasis that is placed on features involving specialized training that every military leader should have (*very good military knowledge*) and also the importance that such traits as *courageous, responsible, inspiring confidence* have from the point of view of soldiers who have participated in multinational operations.

In conclusion, the characteristics mentioned above mostly belong to the first category of features. The fact is that the first analysis proved that the questionnaire results coincide with one of the formulated hypotheses, namely that soldiers who have participated in multinational theatres of operation will choose as charismatic leader's defining features those which show that he/she inspires trust and confidence and is ready to lead in armed conflict situations. On the other hand, it is clearly seen that most of the features from the second set are considered to be less important in defining a charismatic leader.

During the second phase of data processing and interpretation, the authors analyzed the charismatic military leader's psychological profile outlined after applying the questionnaire to soldiers who had not participated in multinational theatres of operation. After processing the obtained data, the following fact has resulted, revealing that traits belonging to the second category are those that define a charismatic leader from the point of view of soldiers who had not participated in multinational theatres of operation. They described him/her as *empathetic, sociable, good speaker* and *good listener*. They have also labeled him/her as a person *with kindness, extroverted* and *emotionally intelligent*. The personality traits such as *good memory, persuasion* or *optimism* are assigned to this psychological profile as equally important.

As set out above, the military personnel have chosen mainly traits describing the leader as a sociable person who knows how to talk and listen to them, understands them and is also able to empathize with their situation. However, they emphasize the features, which show the leader's positive overall condition.

Hence, similarly to the analysis made in the first stage of data processing and interpretation, the questionnaire results coincide with one of the starting hypotheses, this time with the second one, namely that military people who have not participated in multinational operations will choose such charismatic leader's defining features that outline him/her as a sociable and pleasant person in his/her relations with them.

Going forward, the fact that diametrically opposite personality traits from the first set of personality traits are found is also worth emphasizing. Thus, features such as *vigilance, vision* or *motivation* have values below 5. One may notice that the military personnel described charismatic leaders with respect to the environment in which they worked.

To conclude the first two stages of data processing and interpretation, the obtained differences between the charismatic leader's psychological profiles result from the two categories of soldiers. Thus, *Figure 1* shows in parallel the two psychological profiles to make the differences between them clearly visible.

Regarding similarities, there are traits that have been considered of equal importance for both military categories such as *good speaker, cooperative, intelligent, emotional intelligence* and *optimistic*.

This can be explained by the fact that the above traits are part of a basic feature set of any charismatic leader, which is why they were marked with values higher than 7. As can be easily seen from the comparison of the two profiles, *good speaker* is the highest valued feature. One may notice that the maximum values chosen by the two military categories were granted to *“reliable”*: 9.15 by soldiers who had participated in multinational theatres of operation and *“good speaker”*: 8.9 by soldiers who had not participated in any of them.

Likewise, the obtained minimum values were as follows: *“creative”*: 3.9 for soldiers who had participated in multinational operations and *“vigilant”*: 3.65 for soldiers who had not participated in multinational operations.

As outlined in the first two stages, it is clearly seen that the values on the left side of *Figure 1* are superior for traits belonging to the first category, while the right side of *Figure 1* is dominated by values which belong to the second category; this aspect shows a new approach, namely that the values are directly proportional to the initial assumptions. On the other hand, in terms of differences, they are represented by both the difference between maximum and minimum values, and the discrepancies between the values of the same features in the two profiles.

Regarding responses of the soldiers who have participated in multinational theatres of operation, as regards the first set of features, the maximum value that one of these traits can reach is 9.15 (*reliable*), in the case of the other set of features, the maximum value obtained is 7.95 (*emotional intelligence*), thus a difference higher than one point between the two categories appears from the first comparison.

On the other hand, this difference is maintained for the traits marked with the lowest values: *“vigilant”* obtained the lowest value: 4.95 in the first category, and *“creative”*: 3.9 in the second category.

Instead, most of the soldiers who had not participated in multinational operations before chose the features: *“good speaker”*: 8.9, in the case of the other set of features, *“empathetic”* received the maximum value: 8.75. One may notice a balance between the two categories. Moreover, this balance is also maintained for the features marked with the lowest values, where *“vigilant”* obtained the lowest value: 3.65 in the first category and *“creative”*: 3.95 in the second category.

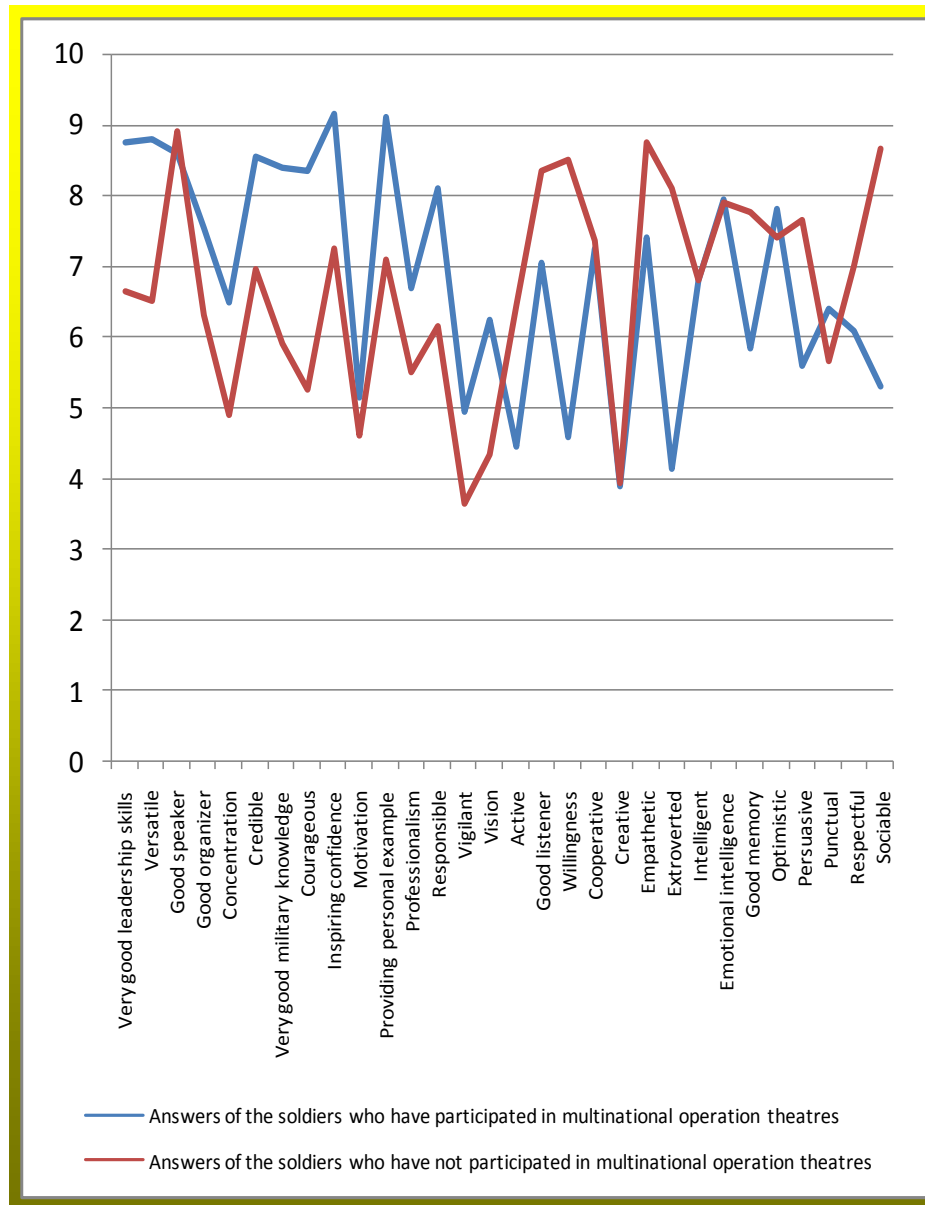


Fig. 1. Outline of the differences between the charismatic leader's psychological profiles, obtained from the two categories of military personnel

Source: own elaboration

Regarding discrepancies between the values of the same feature for the two profiles there is a distinct difference between the extent to which soldiers previously participating in multinational operations chose “extroverted”: 4.15 and the extent to which soldiers who had not participated in such operations indicated the same feature: 8.1.

The third part of data analysis and interpretation was to identify personality traits defining a charismatic leader, both in the view of soldiers who had and those who had not participated in multinational theatres of operation.

In this regard, the authors highlighted in *Figure 2* the average of all answers given by the military personnel.

As there may be seen, the charismatic military leader is largely defined by such features as: *good speaker* 8.75; *reliable* 8.2; *providing personal example* 8.1; *empathetic* 8.1; *emotional intelligence* 7.95; *credible* 7.75; *very good leadership skills* 7.7; *good listener* 7.7; *adaptable* 7.65; *optimistic* 7.6. Of all these traits, 6 belong to the first and 4 belong to the second category, which evidences the balance between the two categories of features. It is clear therefore that this set of features is a combination of the security that the leader inspires and his/her ability to be sociable and understand people. Given this, the authors conclude that a charismatic leader incorporates features of both categories of features, which are of equally great importance when shaping the leader's personality profile.

As regards the features that define a charismatic military leader in the slightest degree, they include: *creative* 3.95; *vigilant* 4.3; *motivation* 4.9; *vision* 5.3; *active* 5.45; *concentration* 5.7; *punctual* 6.1; *professionalism* 6.1; *extroverted* 6.15; *willingness* 6.55. Of all these features, 5 belong to the first category and 5 belong to the second one, highlighting again the balance between the two categories of traits, which strengthens the conclusion shown above, namely that both sets of features are particularly important in shaping the personality profile of charismatic military leaders.

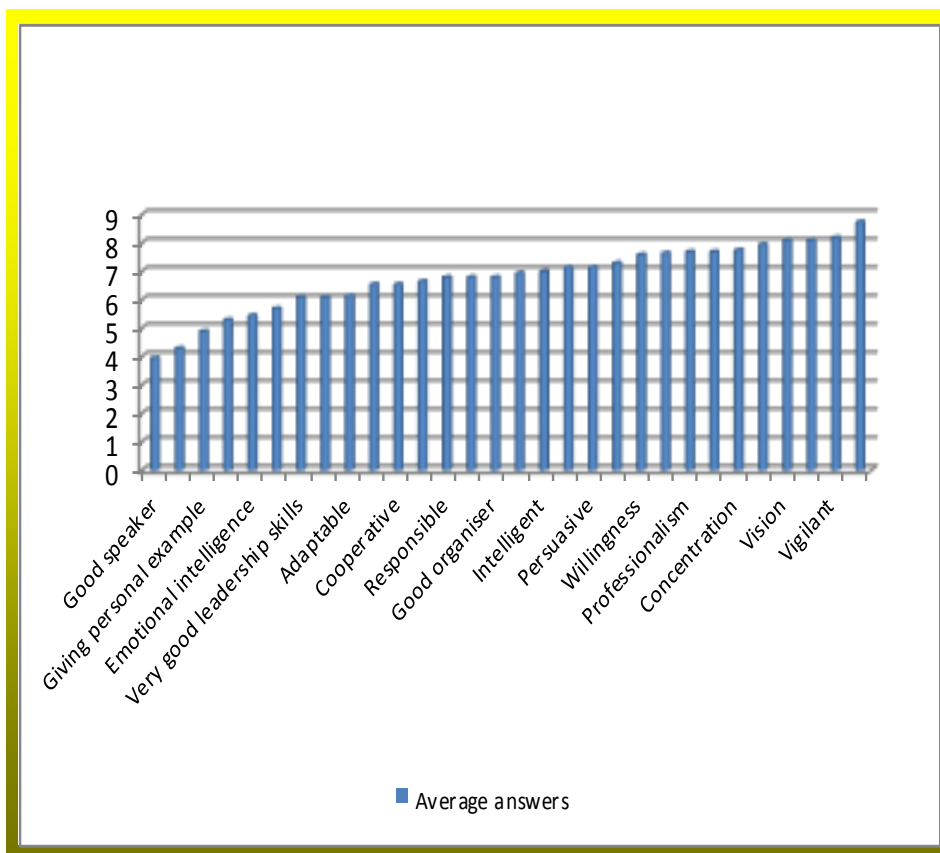


Fig. 2. Personality traits defining the charismatic leader, both in the view of soldiers who have participated and soldiers who have not participated in multinational theatres of operation

Source: own elaboration

Conclusions

Following the processing and interpretation of the obtained data, the assumptions made have been confirmed. This can be explained by the fact that in multinational theatres of operation, the military personnel need security and calmness to carry out missions. On the other hand, soldiers who have not faced real armed conflict situations see in the charismatic leader a person who is loved for his/her way of being, who knows how to speak to them, understands them and listens to them.

One of the first tasks of a commander at the subunit level is to know the personality of the subordinates he/she works with, thus managing to increase their efficiency in the activities carried out. A charismatic leader may benefit from such knowledge, since he/she knows how to bring his/her troops closer to him/her, by giving them confidence and security.

The outlined psychological profile may and must be maximized in formative plans, in terms of designing accordingly formative aims by assuming adequate skills patterns.

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Conflict of interests

The author declared no conflict of interests.

Author contributions

All authors contributed to the interpretation of results and writing of the paper. All authors read and approved the final manuscript.

Ethical statement

The research complies with all national and international ethical requirements.

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Danut-Eugeniu Mosteanu – Professor PhD., Engineer, member, of Chemists Association of Romania and SAMRO. The main directions in which was oriented my scientific research, materialized in the form of articles presented at national and international events or conferences or magazines (120) scientific books (7) and university courses (8), research projects (12), included issues such specializations as and individual training: the CBRN defense, advanced logistics, development of e-learning capabilities in the Army, project management research. A special place in my scientific research was to realize a modern laboratory for chemical analysis and instrumental CBRN defense, which was a result of a scientific research project won at national level.

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