

Personality Profiles of Members of the Army of the Czech Republic

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Abstract A number of requirements that vary in time, space and content are posed on a military professional. If a member of the Armed Forces wants to be successful in his/her activity, his/her competencies will be assessed in terms of a fully-prepared professional who will have the prerequisites for the performance and development of capabilities in the military environment. A personality profile plays an important role within the meaning of stable dispositions and characteristics – parameters of adequate behaviour in the military activity. The study focuses on the personality profile of professional soldiers and the comparison with the corresponding authorized profiles of the Czech population, for the findings of which the NEO-PI-R questionnaire was used. The research activity and its results are part of a project solution for the organization development entitled "Development of Social Competencies of the Commander-Leader" realized by the Department of Leadership at the Faculty of Military Leadership of the University of Defence in Brno.

Key words: personality profile of a soldier, exercise of military profession, army, conscientiousness, extraversion

1. INTRODUCTION

The exercise of the military profession is realized predominantly in a highly variable and dynamic environment. The emphasis is placed on the standards and learned rules of training on the one hand and on the flexibility and dynamics of the team in action on the other hand. The civilian environment does not allow sufficient training for the specifics of the exercise of the military profession, the handling of difficult situations related to the conduct of military activities and action. Therefore, the development of the members of the Army of the Czech Republic (ACR) starts with the educational process at the military secondary school or university; in the case of direct recruitment of recruits it starts within the basic training course. It is further deepened in the preparation and training in units and installations of the Army of the Czech Republic. Everything is conditioned by meeting the demands posed on individuals to enter the ACR (health, psychological and physical demands).

The ACR has well-defined criteria for the selection of personnel and the requirements for a soldier's personality profile. It takes it as an inter-individually different set of psychic characteristics or the characteristics of an individual, who shows a certain level of

integration of the components that create it and a certain organization of their functioning (Nakonečný 1998, p. 497). The basic components of the profile are: psychic dispositions and psychic characteristics. Psychic dispositions, the organized and unified whole of which forms a personality, are relational concepts that express the external relations of the personality, its manifestations in situations and, at the same time, the internal factors determining these manifestations. They create a structure, the elements of which form the psychic characteristics of the personality – the capabilities, which show certain relatively stable traits in contact with the external environment. Therefore, the essential psychic characteristics of individuals are formed in the terms of psychic dispositions, such as intelligence, emotionality, etc. (Nakonečný 1998, p. 497). Personality – in the context of an individual's personality profile – is a relatively open functional system that interacts with its environment.

The experts who perform staff choices are aware of the fact that the personality cannot be examined objectively. As Nakonečný (1998) states, the personality, within psychology, is understood as a hypothetical construct, which means that it cannot be fully observed, but it can only be derived from what is observed. Therefore, experts focus mainly on the psychological health of future soldiers during initial testing. In the selection of military professionals, the army takes into account the perception of reality, decision-making in preferred activities, the creation of space and the prerequisites for further development. It emphasizes the scope and quality of general and specific knowledge, general intelligence, motor skills, speed and accuracy of perception, mechanical and technical understanding, interests, motivation, value orientation or attitude orientation. The physical dexterity and strength are a condition (Dziaková 2009, p. 53).

The moral integrity of an individual, which is closely related not only to selected personality traits, but also to the value characteristics, plays an important role. Either consciously or unconsciously, an individual takes over the values of formal authorities and internalizes them in the course of the socialization process. The formal authority in this case is the Army of the Czech Republic and its representatives – military professionals – leaders at different command and control levels who are responsible for the course of action and behaviour in the decision-making process.

The peculiarity of the military environment is that the needs of the personality are not always a priority; the team's needs often have to

prevail in career situations. At the same time, it is known that the military environment has a rather strong formative influence on the personality of an individual. It can be assumed that in connection with the length of service and the work on a given establishment post, certain changes in the personality profile may occur – in soldier's preferences, in his/her internal attitudes. Due to the specifics of the military profession, it is necessary to pay attention to examining professionals' personality profiles at different stages of their career and training, before leaving for foreign operations or when exercising specific and demanding functions.

Psychologists have developed a variety of methods to determine an individual's personality profile. They can be divided based on the manner of data acquisition and based on the elements of the personality profile they aim at. Tests and questionnaires are the most commonly used methods for data acquisition. Svoboda (2013) distinguishes four different types of tests in the methods used for examining the personality. These are the projective methods, which include the Rorschach test, Word Association Experiment, Thematic Apperception Test, Hand Test, Tests of Incomplete Sentences, Tree-Drawing Test, Figure-Drawing Test, etc. He further distinguishes objective personality tests, including the Stroop Colour-Word Test and Mirror Drawing Test. The questionnaires can be one-dimensional questionnaires (Maudsley Medical Questionnaire, Classical Social Situational Anxiety and Stage-Fright) and multidimensional questionnaires (Interpersonal Diagnosis Questionnaire, the FIRO-B Interpersonal Orientation Questionnaire, Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, DOPEN, Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory, Sixteen Personality Factor Questionnaire (16 PF), Freiburg Personality Inventory, NEO-PI-R, Logo Test).

The most frequently investigated areas of personality include resistance to stress. A number of methods (Paulík 2010) have been developed, which focus on exploring personality traits associated with resistance. These are optimism (LOPS – Levy Optimism-Pessimism Scale, AOS – Arousalability and Optimism Scale), self-confidence measured using the Likert scales, neuropsychic stability – the Eysenck Personality Questionnaire, (EPQ), the Eysenck Personality Inventory (EPI), but also other variants of DOPEN, JEPI-R, the Five-Factor Model of Personality NEO-FFI and NEO-PI-R. The Czech author Mikšík is known for his inventories IHAZEZ, SPIDO, VAROS.

The abovementioned methods of personality exploration are used not only in the civilian environment to confirm different theories and concepts, but also in the military environment, when, for example, the personality of a recruit is investigated with the aim to determine whether he/she has the appropriate characteristics and prerequisites for the exercise of his/her profession – proficiency (or the participants in foreign operations before leaving for the mission). The most widespread method to identify five general personality dimensions are the NEO personality inventories (NEO-PI, NEO-PI-R, NEO-FFI and NEO-PI-3) developed by P.T. Costa and R. R. McCrae (Hřebíčková et al. 2002, p. 2), which have been developed since the 1970s and used in research studies as well as in psychodiagnostics. For these purposes they have been translated into more than 30 languages. The NEO-PI-R is a tool very often used in the ACR as it allows the comparison with other methods (the PVQ according to Schwartz, MCT). Therefore, it has been chosen as a main means of data acquisition in the study dealing with the personality profiles of military professionals of the ACR.

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives and methods of the research

The main objective of the research was to find out what personality profiles prevail in the army and how they differ from the ordinary population. Partial objectives were to find out the following: 1) whether the profiles of the soldiers preparing for the exercise of their profession (students of the University of Defence) differ significantly from the professionals serving in the ACR for a longer time, 2) whether the personality profiles of the ACR soldiers differ significantly from the corresponding authorized personality profiles of the Czech population.

2.2 Scientific methods used

The primary method was to questioning using the NEO-PI-R. Within the research, the version created by Martina Hřebíčková – an authorized study developed by Hřebíčková et al. (2002) was used, verifying the basic psychometric characteristics of the Czech version of the NEO Personality Inventory for both the self-assessment and the assessment of another person. The NEO-PI-R inventory represents a revised NEO Personality Inventory, named according to the first letters of the scale names *N* (*Neuroticism*), *E* (*Extraversion*), *O* (*Openness*). The multidimensional personality inventory of Paul Costa and Robert R. McCrae discovers five personality dimensions: *Neuroticism*, *Extraversion*, *Openness to Experience*, *Agreeableness* and *Conscientiousness*. The NEO-PI-R contains 240 items, 48 items for each scale, which is further divided into 6 subscales. Each subscale contains 8 items, which a respondent answers using a 5-point scale (strongly disagree – disagree – neutral – agree – strongly agree). The items refer to 5 scales and 30 subscales in total describing the personality. The method allows a respondent's personality profile to be obtained using the sum of the scores in individual items of scales and subscales and the subsequent conversion of raw scores to T-scores. The tool was also used to implement the intent to compare recorded results from the populations of the Czech Republic (Hřebíčková et al., 2002).

Neuroticism (N) is a scale determining individual differences in emotional stability and instability as negative emotions, such as fear, depression and embarrassment, are experienced. The individuals who achieve a high score of neuroticism are mentally unstable and their psychic balance is easily violable. On the other hand, individuals with a low score are calm, level-headed and carefree, and are able to better cope with stressful situations that do not disconcert them (Hřebíčková et al., 2002, p. 7).

The individuals who achieve a high score on the Extraversion (E) scale are sociable and are characterized as self-confident, active, talkative, energetic, cheerful and optimistic. They like other people – their company, they enjoy being part of groups and various social events, they like excitement and cheerfulness. Introversion, which is more the absence of extraversion than its contradiction (Costa and McCrae 1992, p. 15), carries the signs of restraint, independence, and level-headedness. The restraint of introverts does not mean a social phobia, but rather the desire to remain alone (Hřebíčková et al., 2002, p. 7).

Openness to experience (O) can be characterized as imagination, sensitivity to aesthetic stimuli, sensitivity to inner feelings, preference for diversity, curiosity and independent judgment. The scale covers the degree of passion for new experience, enjoyments, impressions and emotions. The individuals with a high score are receptive to new ideas and unconventional values. They are characterized as eager to learn, intellectual, endowed with fantasy,

willing to experiment, being interested in art. They are prepared to critically reformulate existing standards and take on new social, ethical and political values. They often behave unconventionally; they test new ways of dealing and prefer a change. The individuals with a low score tend to behave conventionally and hold conservative attitudes. They prefer the well-known, the well-tried things – their emotional responses are often suppressed (Hřebíčková et al., 2002, p. 8).

Agreeableness (A) characterizes interpersonal behaviour, primarily altruism. The individuals with a high score have a heart for others, show favour to others, behave kindly and are willing to help. They expect help from the others, they tend to trust the others and prefer cooperation. On the contrary, the individuals with a low score appear to be hostile and egocentric, have a tendency to disparage the intentions of the others, are rather competing than cooperating. The characteristics constituting the positive pole of this dimension are socially desirable, while the ability to fight for their own interests is also important and a reasonable degree of scepticism contributes to a successful solution of a problem (Hřebíčková et al., 2002, p. 8).

Conscientiousness (C) is connected with the ability to control impulses, and with self-control, which relates to the active process of planning, organizing and performing tasks. The individuals with a high score are described as purposeful, ambitious, diligent, persistent and systematic; they have strong will, are disciplined, reliable, accurate and respectable. These socially desirable characteristics are related to study and job performance, but they also have their shades, which can be seen as exaggerated tidiness, preciseness or workaholic behaviour. The individuals with a low score portray themselves as careless, indifferent and unstable with little interest in achieving goals.

2.3 Research sample

An object of scientific interest was the members of units and installations of the ACR and the students of the full-time military studies at the University of Defence passing through the system of education in the field of leadership. Thus, the research sample consisted of the members of the ACR in a total number of 400, aged 19 - 55 ($M = 26.99$, SD /standard deviation/ = 8.4390) selected using *stratified random sampling*. The group studied was divided into two homogeneous "strata" formed by the ACR soldiers (students) in the total number of 151, aged 19 - 31 ($M = 21.60$, $SD = 1.75$), and the ACR soldiers (non-students) in the total number of 249, aged 20 to 55 ($M = 30.26$, $SD = 10.05$). In each "strata", the principle of simple random selection was applied. The gender and age distribution was not taken into account.

2.4 Administration of the NEO-PI-R test

The methods of writing questioning (pencil – paper) were used to carry out the research. The choice of methods made it possible to contact people who it was difficult to meet and speak to. At the same time, respondents were given an adequate space to be able to devote their time and care to answer the responses. Any influence of the interviewer on the content of the response was avoided and the privacy of the respondents allowed sincerity to fill in the questionnaire. The basic testing tool of the research was the NEO-PI-R personality inventory, a self-assessment version, used in the form of the authorized Hogrefe printing forms. No time limit was specified. Data collection took place in the presence of a psychologist.

2.5 Reliability of the research tools used

The reliability coefficients of Cronbach's alpha (internal consistency) range from 0.91 (*Neuroticism*, *Conscientiousness*) to 0.88 (*Agreeableness*) in the NEO-PI-R inventory (form of self-assessment). The most reliable subscale of the NEO-PI-R (form of self-assessment) is the (O1) Fantasy subscale 0.81, the lowest reliability was recorded in the (O6) Values subscale 0.29 (Hřebíčková et al 2002, p. 19). It can be stated that the reliability of the NEO-PI-R tool is sufficient.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

On the basis of the measurement results of selected personality dimensions, namely *Neuroticism*, *Extraversion*, *Openness to Experience*, *Agreeableness* and *Conscientiousness* of the ACR soldiers (students) and the ACR soldiers (non-students), we have created a personality profile of the members of the ACR, comprehensive of descriptive statistics (averages and standard deviations) and personality profiles of both groups of the ACR members, which we have compared among themselves. The personality profiles of the members of the ACR have been subsequently confronted with the authorized personality profiles of the Czech population. The aim of these comparisons was to determine a potential personality difference, especially negative one, which should be taken into account in connection with the process of education and training of the members of the ACR. The reason for the comparison of civilian and military profiles was the fact that the research into the relationships between personality traits was carried out in a civilian environment and only using a common population sample.

3.1 Comparison of personality profiles

Partial objective of the study 1 was to find out whether the personality profiles of the soldiers preparing for the exercise of their profession (students of the University of Defence) and the professionals serving in the ACR for a longer time differ significantly.

Table 1 (see below): Descriptive statistics, the distribution of personality traits of the ACR. Source: Author's own research.

The abovementioned distribution of personality traits in the groups of the ACR soldiers (students) and the ACR soldiers (non-students), at the level of the raw score, has proven that the ACR soldiers (students) compared to the ACR soldiers (non-students) prefer more the *Openness to Experience* scale, but, at the same time, the *Agreeableness* scale less. *Neuroticism*, *Extraversion* and *Conscientiousness* show comparable values in the scales.

The distribution of personality traits in the groups of the ACR soldiers (students) and the ACR soldiers (non-students) shows that the ACR soldiers (students) put more emphasis on openness, imagination, sensitivity to aesthetic stimuli, sensitivity to inner feelings, preference for diversity, curiosity and independent judgment. A significant level of passion for new experience, enjoyments, impressions and emotions, responsiveness to new ideas, unconventional values and behaviour, prioritization of change before stability, and readiness to critically reformulate valid standards and take on new social, ethical and political values can be assumed. At this stage of training for a job, soldiers learn military teamwork cooperation only; they are rather competing than cooperating.

The group of the ACR soldiers (non-students) prefer interpersonal behaviour and altruism. Understanding for others, appropriate expressions of a favour, willingness to help, but also expectations of help from others, a tendency to trust and prefer cooperation in the unit are approved values. At the same time, they admit that the ability to enforce their own approaches and a dispassionate point of view contribute to the successful task completion.

Partial objective 2 was to determine whether the personality profiles of the ACR soldiers differ from the corresponding personality profiles of the Czech population. In order to compare selected personality traits between the ACR and the population in the Czech Republic (CR), descriptive statistics of personality traits in the population of the CR have been used based on the research results of Hřebíčková et al. (2002, p. 18). A total of 1,365 respondents, of whom 588 men and 768 women (9 respondents did not report their gender) participated in the survey. Their age spread was from 14 to 83, the average age was 30.92 and SD was 13.62. A total of 11 % of the respondents were at the age between 14 and 21; 53 % of the respondents were at the age between 22 and 40 and 34 % of the respondents were at the age between 41 and 83.

The comparison of personality traits in the groups of the ACR soldiers in total and in the population of the CR at the raw score level has proven a difference in the *Neuroticism* scale, when the CR population has a higher score; in the *Extraversion* scale, the group of the ACR soldiers in total has a higher score. Further, the group of the ACR soldiers in total have also a higher score in the *Conscientiousness* scale; on the contrary, the group of the CR population has a higher score in the *Openness to Experience* scale.

Table 2 (see below): Descriptive statistics: the comparison of the ACR and the Czech Republic. Source: Author's own research.

The comparison of the ACR soldiers in total and the CR population has proven that the Czech population more tends to experience negative emotions, e.g. fear, depression, embarrassment, psychic instability and lower psychic balance. At the same time, however, the group of CR population, compared to the group of the ACR soldiers, have preferred more the openness, imagination, sensitivity to aesthetic stimuli, sensitivity to inner feelings, preference for diversity, curiosity and emphasis on the independent judgment, new experience, enjoyments, impressions and emotions, receptiveness to new ideas; further, the inclination to unconventional values and behaviour, preference for change before stability, and greater readiness to critically reformulate valid standards and take on new social, ethical and political values. The ACR soldiers, compared to the CR population, have preferred self-assurance, activity, vigour and optimism, positive relationship to other people, sociability and group interaction, positive attitude to social involvement, excitement and cheerfulness. In addition, they have espoused control and self-control skills in relation to the active process of planning, organizing, and realizing tasks, preferring purposefulness, ambition, diligence, endurance, orderliness, strong will, discipline, reliability, accuracy and order – desirable personality traits in the profile of a military professional.

3.2 Discussion

The main objective of the research was to use the NEO-PI-R questionnaire to find out what personality profiles prevail in the army and whether the overall personality profile corresponds to the requirements for the military profession. In this context, there is a statement related to the partial objectives: the distribution of personality traits in the group of the ACR soldiers (students) and the ACR soldiers (non-students) have proven that the studying

personnel prefers more the *Openness to Experience* scale and less the *Agreeableness* scale.

Openness to Experience is, therefore, related to curiosity, the degree of passion for new experiences and the expectation of practical exercise of a profession. Certain ambitions to critically reformulate the valid standards result from a lack of practice in units and the real acceptance of the internal standards within a unit. The graduates from the University of Defence, where their status is defined by the status of a student, are assigned to adequate positions in the ACR units after the graduation. They take responsibility for the execution of an officer's duties. They acquire new practical information and knowledge that the University of Defence did not provide them with to the extent, which a day-to-day training of troops can provide.

In the case of a lower score in the *Agreeableness* scale, it is advisable to ask a question about the causes of the phenomenon and to modify the practical training of students, which would deepen the principles of team cooperation and leadership in the military environment. In the context of the given results, it is possible to use the information from the sociological survey, which took place in 2017 in the ACR combat element – the 4th Rapid Deployment Brigade - and was focused on the graduates of the University of Defence in Brno. It has resulted from the conclusions that the Brigade officers are tolerant of the lower level of military-technical capabilities of the new graduates from the University of Defence – officers. Logically, these shortcomings result from little practical experience. The inexcusable personality disorders in the superiors are considered to be as follows: the lack of a sense of justice and unprofessional behaviour. Even in an environment that is defined by military regulations, subordination and precise rules of working performance, there is a need to introduce an ethical education for the members of the ACR, which presupposes the existence of a suitable comprehensive model of ethical education and individual programs resulting from it. Currently, a complex model of ethical education of the ACR soldiers does not exist (Mikulka 2017, p. 141). At the same time, we declare that the completion of the education and training process at the University of Defence in Brno (UoD) can be expressed in the concepts, e.g. a military professional or a military leader who is proactive, disciplined, is able to cope with complex crisis situations and is also able to lead the other team members. The given profile corresponds not only to the demands of the military profession, but also to the demands placed on the knowledge, competencies of all the educated for life in the postmodern era (Pospíšil, 2017, pp. 483-484).

It results from the partial results of objective 2 that substantial differences in the personality traits of the ACR soldiers versus the Czech population have been recorded in the scales - *Neuroticism*, *Extraversion*, *Openness to Experience* and *Conscientiousness*. Military professionals in the preparation for their profession and in the everyday military work process show a higher score in the *Extraversion* and *Conscientiousness* scales. These are the characteristics that correspond to the demands for the personality profile of a soldier and his/her ability to carry out orders, to honour the organization rules and adapt to changes. In dependence on the time and location of service in foreign areas, not only the very nature of the struggle often changes, but the non-military elements, which may have their own diplomatic, political, cultural, religious, social, economic and humanitarian dimensions, often appear. Soldiers have performed and perform operational tasks of a different nature in foreign operations – from the support of the Provincial Reconstruction Team operations to the protection of the perimeter in the area of responsibility. They are ready to communicate and cooperate with coalition partners, governmental and non-governmental organizations. The training and skills acquisition of soldiers depend on the character and nature of the mission.

A strong-minded, persistent and disciplined soldier is able not only to get ahead as an individual – leader, but also to support the team and approach the issued order – the task conscientiously and resolutely. The courage, dedication and coherence of comradeship in combat are a prerequisite for the operation of a high-quality military unit.

The ACR soldiers have showed a lower score in the *Openness to Experience* and *Neuroticism* scales. The first result predicates about a more frequent tendency to behave conventionally and to hold conservative attitudes, which in the case of the ACR as an organization with a consistent structure, personnel hierarchy, rules, subordination and military regulations corresponds to real conditions and requirements. In the *Neuroticism* scale, military professionals have again demonstrated the desired elements of personality profile – mental balance, coping with stressful situations, resistance to psychological exhaustion.

4. CONCLUSION

The research study has proven that personality profiles of soldiers correspond to the requirements for the exercise of a profession. Personality profiles of soldiers reflect, in accordance with their age, both professional and life experience and the quality of psychological readiness - that is the basic prerequisite for being successful in their activities, in their positions and for having a positive influence on colleagues, subordinates and team work. The "concept of professionalism" emphasizes the respect for individuality, responsibility, activity of each individual as well as the process of maturing the individual within the profession. Military professionals are always in some stage of preparation and in some stage of personality development. Everyday practical training, personal discipline, the knowledge of equipment and regulations, expertise, the ability to deal with new situations reflect the ability to adapt to set conditions, adequately tackle and react to the given circumstances and events. However, the combination of theoretical and practical knowledge is crucial for each command and control level. The generally valid characters of the soldier's personality profile correspond to the requirements for the exercise of a profession and the approach to combined-arms and specific activities, but they are conditioned by the willingness of an individual to accept the military profession as a mission.

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Table 1: Descriptive statistics, the distribution of personality traits of the ACR. Source: Author's own research.

Personality traits	The ACR soldiers in total			The ACR soldiers (students)			The ACR soldiers (non-students)		
	Number of resp.	Average	SD	Number of resp.	Average	SD	Number of resp.	Average	SD
Age	400	27	8,435	151	22	1,751	249	30	9,176
Neuroticism	400	66.774	22.545	151	65.940	22.561	249	67.280	22.567
Extraversion	400	116.296	16.202	151	118.113	17.917	249	115.194	14.999
Openness to Experience	400	102.910	16.724	151	107.265	17.252	249	100.269	15.857
Agreeableness	400	114.065	18.601	151	110.159	19.339	249	116.434	17.763
Conscientiousness	400	131.020	19.166	151	130.894	21.116	249	131.096	17.925

Table 2: Descriptive statistics: the comparison of the ACR and the Czech Republic. Source: Author's own research.

Personality traits	The ACR soldiers in total		Population of the CR	
	Number of respondents	Average	Number of respondents	Average
Age	400	27	1,365	31
Neuroticism	400	66.774	1,365	94.970
Extraversion	400	116.296	1,365	109.240
Openness to experience	400	102.910	1,365	117.040
Agreeableness	400	114.065	1,365	116.420
Conscientiousness	400	131.020	1,365	111.800