

Value profiles of members of the Army of the Czech republic

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Abstract The aim of the research was to find out what value profiles exist among military professionals at the beginning of their careers and whether their representation differs from the population distribution of the Czech Republic. As a basic tool the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) created by S. Schwartz was used in an abridged version of 21 items. The research sample consisted of 151 respondents - students in tertiary education. It has been found that the Openness to Change value is represented most strongly among the respondents, which corresponds more to the overall preference of the value in the population than to the desired Conservatism value of the military environment. The results have been obtained in connection with the solution of a specific research project on the moral integrity of military professionals and used to improve and develop the education of military professional ethics.

Key words value, value profile, value education, training of military professionals

1. INTRODUCTION

Values are of crucial importance for the lives of both individuals and the society. In relation to an individual, they influence his/her thought as well as action. According to Vávra (2007, p. 6), they fulfil a number of important functions, such as motivation, justification of behaviour, the provision of standards for evaluating people and events, directing attention and perception. From the viewpoint of the society and its individual social groups and organizations, they are a basic component of culture; they enable the integration of the culture itself and its linkage with the personality system and the social system (Large Dictionary of Sociology, 1997, p. 376). Both aspects need to be taken into account when preparing professionals in all branches.

In connection with the preparation for military profession, the highest demands on the soldier's physical condition and mental toughness, and the ability to handle stress are mentioned most often (Ullrich a kol. 2015, Pospíšil 2015, Dziačková 2009). However, the military profession also has its own value dimension (Nekvapilová, 1997, 2003). The professional performance of a soldier requires the internalization (acquisition) of certain values characteristic of the military environment, not only for the easier adaptation of an individual to the environment, but also because the military profession is based on a high degree of cooperation (units are trained as teams). It also lays high demands on the observance of professional ethics. These are only the values, which are followed

and have a direct influence on the behaviour and emotional and moral charge for an individual (Vávra 2007, p. 8).

From the viewpoint of values the military profession shows a certain internal contradiction, which every individual in the process of preparing for the military profession has to cope with. From the social point of view the military activity is a service. It requires altruistic behaviour, the ability to sacrifice for the sake of higher goals and the whole from its executors. It arises as a result of the need to defend the human community. It has its long-established tradition, the origin of which is associated with the emergence of the state in general. According to sociologists, the state is of fundamental importance for its emergence as it creates a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical and symbolic violence in a particular territory and in relation to its population (Bourdieu 1998, p. 74) in the form of special institutions such as the police or the army. In the history of the human society, the war belongs to the oldest fields of human activity. It is the wars, in which moral virtues stand out, i. e. honour, dedication and heroism. Individuals in combat sacrifice their own lives, commanders decide on the tens or hundreds of lives of their subordinates.

The essence of military activity is "the control of violence" (Huntington 1957), as emphasized by the founders of military sociology S. Huntington and M. Janowitz in the 1960s. The traditional function of the armed forces is, therefore, a successful armed struggle. The basic duties of the commander (officer) stem from here. They are as follows: preparation and conduct of military activities in and out of combat. In the field of ethics, it means that every soldier must accept the fact that he/she prepares deliberately for the physical destruction of the enemy (human) that he/she can lose his/her life during the fight or witness the death of his/her comrades and buddies. The use of violence in military activities has a legitimate and legal dimension. However, the legitimacy of a military intervention is not the result of a soldier's free choice, but it is always a political decision in modern democracies. The lawfulness of the use of armed violence is currently linked to the ethics of the peaceful arrangement of the Commonwealth of Independent States (the UN peace and security agenda), international humanitarian law and the law of war.

The consequence of the concentration of pressure groups in the state is that "the institutions entrusted with the maintenance of the order separate gradually from the normal social world, that the physical violence can only be applied by a specialized, specially appointed, centralized and disciplined group in the society" (Bourdieu 1998, pp. 75-76). Ultimately, specially trained and armed groups may,

therefore, pose a threat to the society itself, if they cease to respect their legitimate position in the state and engage in power rivalries.

It should be remembered that the separation of armed forces from the society in the state organization is not absolute. In most cases, citizens enter these forces in the adult age; they have their habits, values and attitudes formed within their civic coexistence. In the process of preparation they are exposed to a value system based on the nature of the military activity they must accept if they are to perform military activity well and responsibly. The question of a real, not only verbally declared, perception of a personal obligation to the unconditional fulfilment of a military oath is at the forefront (Mikulka 2017, pp. 54-55). If both environments differ significantly in the value preference, an individual gets into a difficult situation that may have the character of an internal moral conflict.

In view of these characteristics of the military profession, it is not only interesting, but also necessary to identify the value profiles of military professionals at different stages of their careers. In the preparation stage, it is possible (based on the findings) to predict the degree of identification related to the values of the military profession and to focus on the educational work with future soldiers effectively. The results found during the career of professionals can be used for preventive programs to eliminate moral failures in the exercise of the profession (abuse of power, abuse of physical force or other special training, e.g. for coping with personal situations).

Although the research into the value orientation of Czech military professionals is not a point of systematic interest, it is possible to rely on the findings of foreign research studies of moral competency in the military environment (Verwijn, Hofhuis and Soeters 2007), in the environment of police schools (Visu-Petra, Borlean, Chendran and Bus 2008; Babinčák and Klimešová 2011), in the environment of security services (Norris 2005) and in the domestic and foreign research among university students (Slováčková 2001, Colesante and Biggs 2001; Norris 2005).

Values affect many aspects of an individual's moral competency. If we adopt the concept of moral competency as the ability to make decisions and to formulate statements that are moral and to act on their basis (Lind, 1986, 2004), then the values, especially the moral ones, are the basis for formulating moral statements. It is also possible to assume the relationship between values and moral reasoning. Feather (according to Ostini, Ellerman, 1997) states that changing the degree of moral reasoning also induces a change in values. The connection between moral judgments and values is based on the very essence of the development stages of moral judgment according to Kohlberg, where there is a typical preference of a certain value type for each stage – e.g. in the third stage, it is *Conformity and Benevolence* (Babinčák and Klimešová, 2011). Values form a part of the models of behaviour (Rest 1994).

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Objectives and methods of the research

The main objective of the research was to determine the value profiles of Czech military professionals in the process of preparation for their military career, whether these profiles differ from the average values in the population. The following questions formed partial objectives: 1) To what extent is the *Conservatism* value, which is characteristic of military professionals, represented among students? 2) How is the *Self-Enhancement value*, including the *Power* value, represented? A high level of identification with this value may be a risk factor for security officers leading to a failure in stressful situations. Attention has been focused primarily on the

higher-order value types to ensure the reliability of results in the abridged version of the PVQ tool (Vávra 2007).

The Shalom Schwartz's approach became a starting point for determining value profiles. The reasons were both practical and theoretical. The same approach with the same tool was used for the research of value profiles of the population in the Czech Republic within the European Social Survey (ESS). The comparative part of the research objective can be achieved only when using the same methodology.

For theoretical reasons, the Schwartz's holistic approach to values can be considered significant as it includes both a certain value psychology and the rationale for possible generalization to a higher level, i.e. the transfer of aggregated results to a group level (Vávra 2007). Even if Schwartz uses only quantitative methods, the advantage of his approach is the fact that he captures the values that are not significantly influenced by the current context, i.e. he aims at identifying the most significant values at the top of the hierarchy that are applied in different life situations (Vávra, 2007). The values in this concept (1987, 1990) have five formal characteristics: the values are concepts or beliefs; they relate to desirable endpoints or behaviour; they are beyond specific situations; they manage the selection or evaluation of behaviour and phenomena; they are arranged according to relative importance, and they are not in isolation, but they create a certain structure with relationships of similarities and oppositions. It is always assumed that the whole value structure of respondents is measured, i.e. no significant value dimension is neglected (Schwartz 1992).

To determine the value profile, the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), developed by Schwartz, was used in an abridged version with 21 items divided into ten basic value types. This version of the PVQ, created and recommended by Shalom Schwartz (Schwartz et al., 2001), was used within several waves of European Social Surveys (ESS) (Vávra 2007). Twenty-one items create ten value types (*security, conformity, tradition, independence /self-direction/, stimulation, hedonism, power, achievement, universalism and benevolence*), which are further grouped into four higher-order value types (*conservatism, openness to change, self-enhancement and self-transcendence*). Each item is presented using a short verbal portrayal characterizing the type of personality attitude. The advantage of this tool is that it is possible to combine it with the Moral Judgement Test (MJT) questionnaire (Lind, 2004) as well as the questionnaire identifying the personality profile of the NEO-PI-R respondents.

The *Conservatism value* is formed by the values of *Security* (SE: safety, harmony and stability of an individual and the security of society and relations, conformity and tradition), *Conformity* (CO: self-control or self-discipline in actions, hedonism, behaviour, etc. wherever there is a possibility that an individual's activity may interfere with or endanger others and may violate social expectations and standards, respect for parents and the elderly) and *Tradition* (TR: tradition, respect, commitment and acceptance of the customs and ideas that traditions or religion offer, modesty, acceptance of the lot, honouring traditions).

The *Openness to Change* value includes the values of *Self-Direction* (SD: independence, freedom of action, creativity, curiosity, need for autonomy, independence and control) *Stimulation* (ST: variety and excitement of life, stimulation, excitement, novelty, life challenges) and *Hedonism* (HE: joy, pleasure and sensuous gratification, self-satisfaction, need for pleasure).

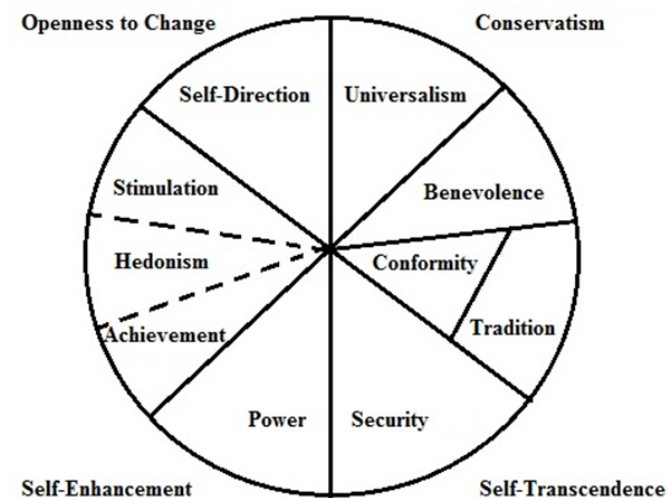
The *Self-Enhancement value* (in some studies also self-empowerment) saturates the values of *Achievement* (AC: success,

recognition, personal performance, personal success based on demonstrating competency according to social standards) and *Power* (PO: influence, power, social status, prestige, control or dominance over people and resources).

The *Self-Transcendence* (also *Transcendence*) value includes the value of *Benevolence* (BE: preservation and enhancement of the welfare of people with whom we are in frequent personal contact, friendship, love, loyalty, benevolence and responsibility) and *Universalism* (UN: justice, respect, tolerance and care for the welfare of all people and of nature, social justice, equality, peace around the world, environmental protection).

The abridged version of the Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ) can be considered as reliable, even though it is known that the reliability coefficient of Cronbach's internal consistency α of the PVQ tool is lower than that of the Schwartz Value Survey (SVS) questionnaire (Schwartz et al., 2001). Based on the data analysis of the ESS, Vávra (2007) emphasizes that the reliability of the 4 higher-order value types is sufficient, even if the reliability of the scales of 10 lower-order value types consisting of two and in one case of three items is relatively low - often lower than 0.6 (according to the statistical theory, Cronbach's internal consistency α lower than 0.6 is unacceptable, as notified by Řeháková 2006). In the case of the PVQ, it is possible to get above this level if the reliability of the value scales of the 4 higher-order value types, consisting of 4 to 6 items, is measured.

Figure 2: Structure of human values developed by Shalom Schwartz



Source: <https://www.slideshare.net/jonrwallace/values-11550083>

2.2 The research sample and the course of research

The research sample consisted of 151 respondents aged 19 - 31 ($M = 21.60$, $SD = 1.75$). The sample was selected using stratified random sampling. The gender and age distribution was not taken into account. Although the regression analysis has shown that the age has the greatest impact on the four higher-order value types (Vávra 2007, p. 42) as regards the socio-demographic data, the age distribution was not taken into account in the study since most of the respondents in the research sample have been included in one age group in the comparative studies: 15 - 24 years of age. The gender distribution was not taken into account due to the small number of women in the sample under study.

The respondents filled in the printed form, the statements were marked A to U and each item was evaluated on a 6-point scale: 1-

Very much like me; 2-Like me; 3-Somewhat like me; 4-A little like me; 5-Not like me; 6-Not like me at all. In the PVQ form, the versions for men and women were merged into one form; however, the gender correctness was maintained with both variants for both men and women. The scores in subscales represent the average of subscale items rated on the 6-point scales. The lower the value, the greater the respondents' identification with the given value on the average.

The Administration of the PVQ tool took place within the course of Field Training II in February, March and September 2016. It was a classical form of mass administration in individual study groups on the basis of the written "informed consent" of the respondents and the consent of the guarantors of the subject. The size of groups ranged from 20 to 40 respondents, depending on the possibilities and conditions at each test site. In each group, the same conditions for filling in the questionnaire were provided. Anonymity was guaranteed for the respondents. The guidelines emphasized the need to respond to individual items as truly as possible with respect to oneself, not with regard to the objective accuracy or commonly expected solution (desirability). During the administration of the questionnaire, an authorized person was present to answer any questions of the respondents with a view to eliminate any discomfort caused by the misunderstanding of the formulation of items. The time for completing the PVQ questionnaire was approximately 10 minutes.

3. FINDINGS

It has resulted from the evaluation of the questionnaires that the higher-order value profile *Openness to Change*, characterized by *Self-Direction*, *Stimulation* and *Hedonism* values, has been represented most in the entire sample examined. The *Self-Transcendence* value including the *Benevolence* and *Universalism* values was the second in the sequence. The observed *Conservatism* value is in the 3rd position in terms of overall preferences in the sample under study. All responses were spread over a scale in the range interval of 2 to 3: Like me – Somewhat like me.

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of value characteristics of students - military professionals

	Number of respondents	Average
Age	151	22
Conservatism (C)	151	2.892
Openness to Change (OC)	151	2.385
Self-Enhancement (SE)	151	3.134
Self-Transcendence (ST)	151	2.441

Source: Author's own research

The differences in higher order values were found in the sample under study, depending on the study orientation. The sample consisted of students of the same year students of three faculties with a different focus: the focus of command and management (table commanders and managers), technical specialization (engineers), medicine (medical students) and students of the Faculty of Physical Education and Sport (physical education students). Table 2 is illustratively presented.

The results show that the students of technical disciplines who prefer less *Openness to Change* than the whole set differ most from the results of the whole set, on the contrary prefer the value of *Self-Enhancement*. Students of physical education and sport form the second group which has different results of the whole set. However,

for the small number of respondents in the group, the measured results are not entirely conclusive.

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of value characteristics of students - military professionals according to study orientation

	Number of resp.	average age in the group	C	OC	SE	ST
commanders and managers	56	21,7	2,85	2,27	3,07	2,38
engineers	58	21,4	3,17	3,00	2,50	3,00
medical students	32	22,06	2,79	2,38	3,01	2,23
physical education students	5	21,8	3,57	2,53	2,85	3,12
values for the whole file	151	22	2,89	2,38	3,13	2,44

Source: Author's own research

How does this profile correspond to the value orientation of the Czech population? The results of the research published in The Value Portrait of European Countries and The Comparative Analysis Using the Shalom Schwartz Approach were used for comparison (Vávra 2007). The Czech Republic participated in both data collection waves within the ESS in 2002 - 2004. The results for a combined set of the two waves, which amounted to 4,386 respondents, were used for comparison.

On a European scale, the most preferred values are *Benevolence* and *Universalism*; the least preferred values are *Achievement* and *Power* (Vávra 2007). According to the international comparison of 21 countries, the Czech Republic appears to be rather "average" as a country - in addition to the *Power* item, it does not occupy an extreme position in any item. In the Czech Republic, respondents report the *Security and Conformity* values most, the *Tradition value* (it also includes the value of higher-order conservatism) less. In the value of a higher-order *Self-Transcendence*, the Czech Republic finds itself in one of the last places due to the fact that it shares the last places with the *Benevolence* and *Universalism* values in the sequence of the countries surveyed. As to the type of *Openness to Change*, the Czech Republic occupies the middle position among the countries in the item of *Self-Direction*; however, in the case of *Stimulation and Hedonism*, it is at the end of the sequence. It is interesting that in the type of *Power* it has the lowest average of all countries; on the contrary, in the type of *Achievement* it is one of the highest averages. Both values saturate the value of the higher-order *Self-Enhancement*. It seems "as if the respondents put much more emphasis on an acquired property and respect from the others than on valuing their own abilities and success" (Vávra, 2007, p. 28).

The preference of the *Openness to Change* value profile in the students - military professionals corresponds to the findings in the population. In the ESS, a higher proportion of the *Openness to Change* type has been recorded in the age group of 15 - 24 years, which includes most of the research population than in the other age groups within the Czech population. It has also been shown that most members of the population are concentrated in this age group in the *Openness to Change* type.

The higher-order type *Conservatism* has been found on the third degree of representation in the respondents who have stayed in the military environment for 2 years. The responses in the sample occurred in the range from 1.3 to 4.17, which indicates the group's heterogeneity; however, a shift towards the desired values of the profession in individuals can be derived from this ascertainment.

Unfortunately, in the whole sample, a high degree of identification has occurred only in 4 respondents, the same was the number of people with low preference for this higher-order value.

4. DISCUSSION

The aim of the study was to verify the extent, to which the respondents had acquired some selected values of the military profession during the period of their stay in the military environment. These values affect the professionalism of the soldier's performance significantly. The research was focused on one year of the study in a newly introduced five-year program.

In the Czech military environment, there are often discussions on the subject: How much time is required for a young person to identify himself/herself with the values of the military profession and organization? The results already show that we cannot think about weeks or months in relation to the higher-order value *Conservatism*, which includes *Conformity* that contains values of respect for the rules and authorities that are the pillars of the military profession along with the *Tradition value*. It can be assumed that a longer-term monitoring of respondents at specific time intervals, e.g. of one academic year, could also significantly demonstrate that it is largely an individual journey.

Even if there are already many studies of value orientations according to the S. Schwartz methodology implemented with university students as well as security components (the police, security services and army), it is not possible to make a complete comparison of the results obtained using these researches. They rather used the PVQ in a modified version of 40 items and the rating scale was defined exactly in the reverse order 6 - Very much like me, 1 - Not like me at all. Therefore, the results obtained from the CESES 2/2007 study (Vávra 2007) are used in this study for comparison.

In the comparison of the observed results with the results of the investigation among the pupils of the Secondary Police School in Slovakia (the total number of respondents was lower - 91 and the average age was higher - 25 years of age), it is obvious that the socio-cultural environment can have a significant influence on the preference of the higher-order value *Conservatism*. In a sample of Slovak secondary school pupils, the *Power*, *Tradition* and *Conformity* values gained the highest preferences. Their preferences were more distinct from the preferences of the current Slovak population (Babinčák, Klimešová 2011, p. 27).

5. CONCLUSION

The study has shown that in the value profiles of the group of students - military professionals as a whole the *Openness to Change* value profile is more strongly represented than other profiles, which rather corresponds to the preferences of the age group in the whole population than to the desired changes in preferences with regard to the necessary degree of identification with the professional value *Conservatism*.

On the other hand, the higher degree of identification with a given higher-order value creates an appropriate environment for education both from the viewpoint of training and education of military professionals.

Due to the less numerous identification with the *Self-Enhancement* value, a lower degree of identification with the *Power* value (that interested us most in relation to the environment of the armed

forces) can be assumed. It has been proved that the lower preference of the *Self-Enhancement* value does not automatically mean a lower preference of both values that saturate the higher-order value (Vávra 2007).

The differences of value preferences have showed depending on the field of study. From this group, students of technical disciplines evinced the most important differences.

It would be interesting to demonstrate using the same tool, whether the value orientation changes significantly with the course of study and the length of the service and whether the length of the service correlates with the increasing preferences of *Conservatism and Self-Enhancement*.

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