

PROFESSIONAL COMPETENCE OF MILITARY COMMANDERS IN THE AREA OF EFFECTIVE MANAGEMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES IN COMBAT CONDITIONS

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Purpose: The main objective of the research is to identify the research gap in the identification of the latest experiences in management of competence of military commanders in the context of resource management on the modern battlefield.

Design/methodology/approach: The research presented in this paper is based on an analysis of the literature on the subject, a critical review of selected areas of management competence of military commanders and the applied interview technique. The literature study took into account secondary sources, which were research communications in the subject area as well. Using methods of logical deduction and requesting, conclusions and recommendations were generated. Combining several research methods resulted in obtaining a broader context of the studied phenomenon and ensured a higher quality of the conducted research.

Findings: As a result of the research, a gap was identified in the process of preparation of military commanders in military universities carried out so far. By means of deduction and logical inference, the value-forming and mobilization competencies recognized by experts as essential for managing the compact organizational structure of subordinate soldiers during combat in current operations were systematized. Changes in the contemporary security environment necessitate the development of a new, tailored model for the preparation of the modern military commander. The proposals presented are an open set - they should be constantly monitored and cyclically updated.

Research limitations/implications: Research interests have been limited to the conclusions of the current Russian-Ukrainian conflict, as the most similar in specificity, complexity and actors to the existing threats in relation to Poland.

Practical implications: The recommendation developed on the basis of the conducted research is the identified need to develop value-creating and mobilization competencies as important in managing military personnel during combat. The practical result of the research is a proposal to train military commanders in these areas as the main training in a military academy or training center.

Originality/value: Based on the research conducted, the article proposes original system solutions for managing the development of military commanders' competence in relation to the challenges and threats facing them on the future battlefield.

Keywords: professional competence, military personnel, human resource management.

Category of the paper: research paper.

1. Introduction

Process of security destabilisation already underway before 2022 has resulted in an increase in military and non-military threats, as well as demands and expectations placed on internal and external security services. Soldiers, policemen and officers, as well as other specialized services, faced new challenges based on the purpose of the service, as well as their responsibility for the state, society and its citizens. Leaving aside obvious aspects such as the level of training of personnel and equipping them with state-of-the-art means of influence, the very process of their preparation also becomes important, supplementing it with competencies previously overlooked or treated with less attention. The values that determine a state's defense capabilities are also changing. War theory researchers have long constated that *a war is a field of uncertainty; three-quarters of what warfare is based on is covered by a fog of greater or lesser uncertainty* (Clausewitz, 2022, p. 65). Contemporary researchers, on the other hand, emphasize that *contemporary and future conflicts will require the ability to produce, distribute and use innovative solutions. The battlefield has thus become a multifaceted and complex* (Szulc, 2004, p. 231).

The professional competence of military personnel has been discussed in the literature for a long time, although the greatest interest has been in recent years. However, they have not been defined in a clear and generally accepted way. Researchers working in this area are asking whether they are some general professional traits revealed in different work situations, or whether they encompass many other specific, sometimes unrelated skills. Regardless of the resolution of this dispute, the essence is to improve and shape the professional competence of military commanders to such an extent that they are able to fulfill their statutory tasks related to the area of state security in the context of multifaceted and multidimensional threats.

The research on the competence of professional military commanders in light of recent experience was inspired by observations and exchange of experiences with Ukrainian soldiers and citizens after the beginning of the aggression of the Russian Federation. The choice of this subject matter was dictated by completely new challenges in terms of the forms and methods that Ukrainian commanders faced in the battle. Moreover there were interests in the evolution of these competencies and the requirements for soldiers in a new threat situation, as well as the author's own professional experience. The research inquiry was directed at determining the importance of military discipline in the task force, the role of leadership and building morale in soldiers, as part of the development of management competencies of tactical level commanders, as one of the determinants of success in the command process. Based on this, a research gap has been identified in the lack of up-to-date knowledge of the key competencies of tactical level commanders vis-à-vis the methods used by Russian troops in combat. From this, a research question was formulated as to what management competencies are most relevant on the current battlefield? The main purpose of this publication is the cognitive function of identifying

capabilities in the area of management competence of military commanders in light of recent experience. In order to achieve the main research goal, the research was conducted using such methods, techniques and research tools as critical analysis of the literature, individual partially categorized interview, secondary research and logical deduction. The research was conducted by limiting itself to the currently largest armed conflict in Ukraine in terms of its scale, location in relation to Poland, and effects on the victims and the region as a whole.

2. Literature review

The issue of competence is definitely an interdisciplinary concept with its connotations in many fields of science. This term can be understood as a set of knowledge, skills and qualities that allow you to effectively perform tasks and effectively achieve your own goals in the context of the strategic objectives of the organization. Defined in this way, competencies can be referred both to a job position and to the person performing the work in the position. However, in today's labor market, competencies have a broader dimension, as they are complemented by general knowledge, employee experience and human resource specialized knowledge. They then give the organization a new competitive advantage in the market (Swanson, 2023, p. 277). In the literature, approaches to defining competence refer to different approaches: the term "competence" - is a functional approach, refers to the ability to achieve minimum standards of set goals, and "competency" - a behavioral approach, refers to the behavior of the employee that enable him to achieve high performance at work (Szczepańska-Woszczyna, 2016, p. 50).

An interesting division of professional competencies into two main groups that include social competencies in their set can be found in the publication of Filipowicz:

- core competencies, within which he details:
 - cognitive competence - broadening of horizons, ability to learn, creativity;
 - social competence - contacts with superiors and other employees;
 - personal competence - commitment, perseverance;
- executive competence:
 - business competence - business orientation, industry knowledge, diagnosing customer needs, sales techniques;
 - corporate competence - identification with the company, customer focus, openness to change, ethics and values, organizational agility and professional knowledge;
 - managerial competence - team building, caring for subordinates, delegating, motivating, leading, organizing, planning, process and project management, strategic thinking and change management (Filipowicz, 2016, pp. 37-39).

However, there is an emerging view among many researchers in this context that professional competence should be considered in relation to the employee's personality. Thus, in the British and Scandinavian model, the prevailing conviction is that the professional competence of employees should be considered independently of the permanent structures of their personality. Such elements as mental predispositions or personality traits are not included in these sets of competencies. A slightly different approach in this setting is proposed by the American interpretation, where the dominant approach has become person-oriented (e.g., behavioral event interviews). The purpose of such analysis is to identify those characteristics that make it possible to distinguish individuals with above-average performance from others. Thus, competencies in this approach include skills, knowledge, personal characteristics and behavioral (Kupczyk, Stor, 2017, p. 10).

A characteristic motive for the effective functioning of modern organizations and the community more broadly is professionalization, which is inextricably linked to the need for high levels of competence. And so while these have applied to specific professions for a long time, much higher expectations are placed on them nowadays, as a result of the increasing importance they are playing (Oleksyn, 2018, p. 12). This is clearly evident in a military organization, whose peculiarity lies in the need for management personnel - i.e., commanders - to acquire high competence, and it belongs to the group of learning organizations - in a changing environment, high technology and rapidly increasing expectations of society. The result of the interaction of the above elements should be an effective and unwavering command, especially in a hierarchical arrangement that delegates tasks and competencies to contractors.

Command is a distinctive form of directing human resources in the army and should be perceived as a special form of leadership in which the military's characteristic principle of one-man decision-making and responsibility for its consequences applies. Some researchers understand *command* as the process by which a commander, within the framework of the authority he possesses, makes decisions with a particular rigor of enforceability, which are intended to achieve the desired goal using the forces and means at his disposal (Posobiec, Prusiński, 2012, p. 6). Doctrinal documents indicate that command is the process by which a commander imposes his will and intentions on his subordinates and by which, assisted by his staff, he plans, organizes, coordinates and directs the actions of his subordinate troops through the use of standard operating procedures and all available means of communicating information (DD/3.2.5, 2007, p. 8). Others still argue that it is the deliberate activity of the commander and his command institutions, which must be carried out within the framework of a clearly defined command system that ensures high combat readiness and proper preparation of troops to best achieve the goal of a battle, combat, operation (Michniak, 2008, p. 40). However, given the purpose of this study, it is necessary to identify the competencies that commanders should be equipped with in order to effectively and efficiently manage personnel and subordinate structures in the area of forming team integrity and discipline, as elements that support

command in achieving goals and fulfilling tasks. To this end, based on his research, the author has developed a model of the profile of a military commander as a team leader and manager, which are shown in Figure 1.

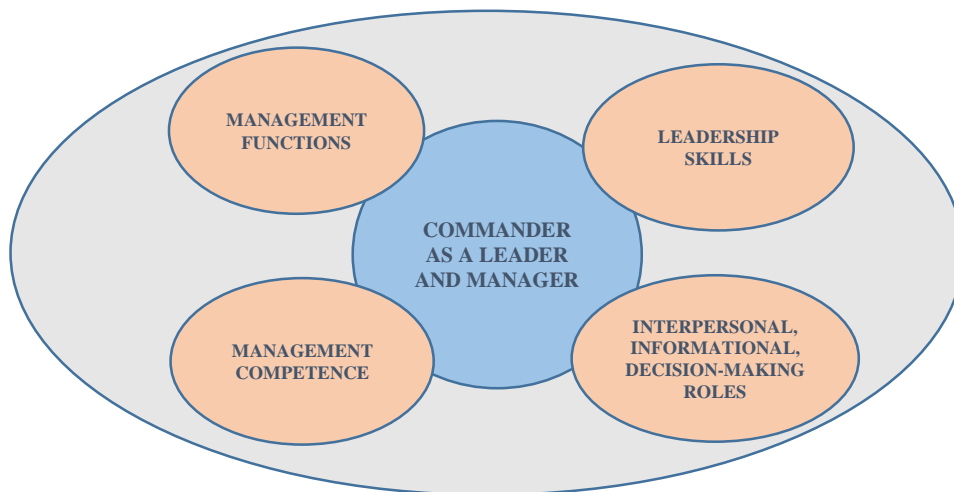


Figure 1. Components of the profile of the commander as a leader and manager.

Source: the author's study.

Looking for competency models in the uniformed forces in the literature, an interesting proposal was presented by Piotrowski, identifying three subsets among the managerial competencies of commanders, additionally defining their current and desired levels and the resulting competency gap. According to him, the managerial competencies of commanders form the following collections:

- a) professional competence;
- b) social competence;
- c) business competence (Piotrowski, 2019, pp. 133-134).

The above proposal for the management competence of commanders, in connection with the performance of their professional duties (command proces), is shown in Figure 2.

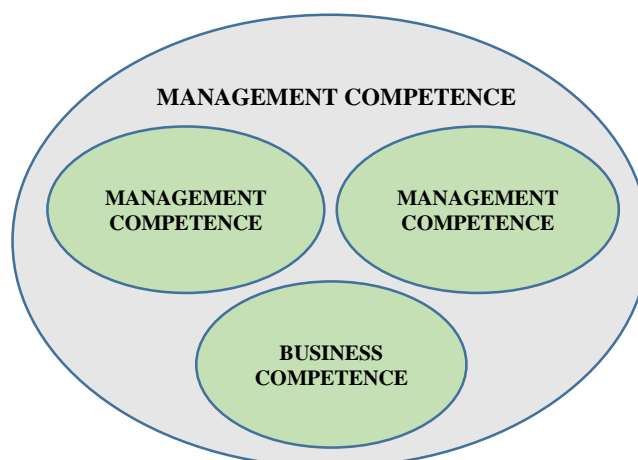


Figure 2. Management competence of military commanders.

Adapted from: Piotrowski, 2019.

In the field of management competence of military commanders, the highest percentage was assigned to professional competence 47.5%, social competence 35.0% and entrepreneurial competence 17.5%. In the component of professional competencies of commanders, the highest rank was assigned to command knowledge, education appropriate to the function, foresight and planning skills, and management knowledge. In the component of social competence, the highest rank was given to leadership, personal qualities, work experience, building good relationships and teamwork. In the component of business competence, these are readiness and willingness to act, commitment to their tasks, commitment to the tasks of subordinates. A profile of key competencies of commanders is presented, which includes such elements as:

- a) command knowledge;
- b) management knowledge;
- c) foresight and planning skills;
- d) problem-solving and decision-making skills;
- e) skills in organizing activities;
- f) building positive relationships and teamwork;
- g) leadership;
- h) professional experience;
- i) readiness to act (Piotrowski, 2019, pp. 138-147).

Complementing the listed elements with the results of available research in the field of command competence, in relation to the new challenges of volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity, which in the literature has taken the term VUCA (Czainska, Balcerzyk, 2023, p. 279), is reasonable to add to this set of capabilities and skills related to the responsibility of commanders. The importance of decisions taken in combat, related to the lives of subordinate soldiers and the possible loss of valuable military equipment, in addition, the consequences of decisions in relation to the civilian population (definitely more responsibility than the head of a civilian company) cause, in the author's opinion, that this range of competence should be included in the set of command competencies. In this regard the profile of essential competence of commanders, in connection with the performance of their professional duties in the command process, is shown in Figure 3. In addition, a subset of management competence shared by civilian managers and military commanders was identified.

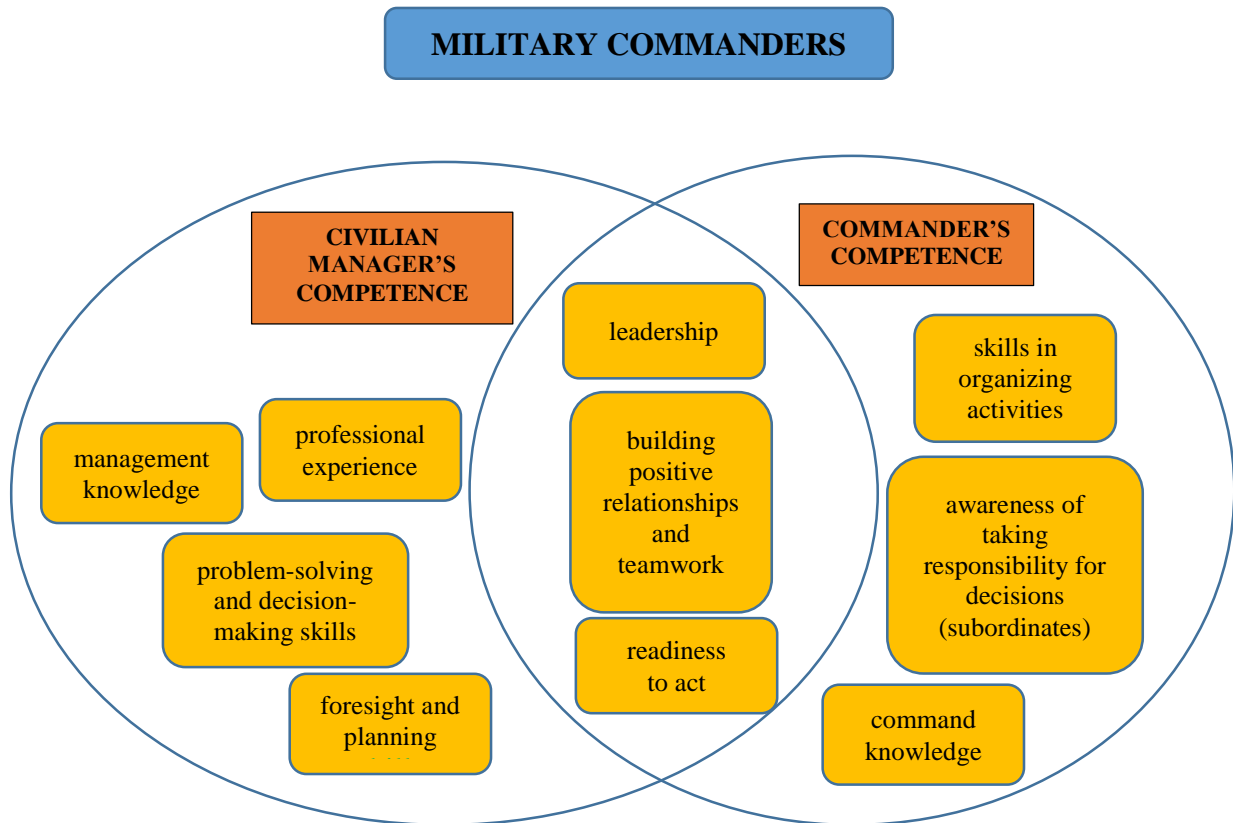


Figure 3. Core competence of military commanders.

Source: the author's study.

Observance of military discipline is considered an imperative for the functioning of active duty military personnel, regardless of rank or duty position. Recently, there have been an increasing number of cases of soldiers coming into conflict with the law, both on and off duty. This may be due to the fact that the size of the army has increased significantly in the recent period from 95,000 soldiers in 2015 to 172,000 in May 2023 (PAP, 2023). Although this is certainly not the only reason. Violations of rules established by military acts and regulations are covered by various types of responsibility. The first is disciplinary responsibility for acts that constitute disciplinary offenses under *Ustawa o obronie Ojczyzny*. Article 353 states that "a violation of military discipline constitutes an act of a soldier consisting of conduct detrimental to the good name or interest of the Armed Forces, culpable exceeding of authority or failure to perform duties arising from legal regulations, including orders and instructions issued by superiors authorized under these regulations". Article 352 of the mentioned law states that "in the case of an act constituting a minor disciplinary offense, the disciplinary superior may refrain from initiating disciplinary proceedings and conduct a disciplinary interview, documented in the form of a note, with the perpetrator of the disciplinary offense". In both cases, the purpose of disciplinary proceedings or conducting a disciplinary interview is to resolve the disciplinary case of the soldier accused of committing a disciplinary offense in the form of a substantive ruling. In the case of insubordination of greater legal gravity, committing an act with the characteristics of a misdemeanor or a felony, the soldier carries

criminal responsibility, listed in the military part of the *Ustawa z dnia 6 czerwca Kodeks karny*. As a result, with the entry into force of the regulations of the *Kodeks karny* - the part relating to the responsibility of soldiers for acts committed, there was a demarcation of disciplinary responsibility from criminal responsibility. On the other hand, however, the above fact can be interpreted as an extension of the soldier's responsibility as a citizen, in connection with the performance of a public function and the fulfillment of the resulting duties, which undoubtedly distinguishes him from a civilian labor market employee, who does not bear part of this responsibility. Another form of responsibility related to the fulfillment of a soldier's official duties, is the social mission of the army as an institution serving citizens - for the purposes of this publication, it has been adopted as social responsibility. Recent world events within international and internal security clearly show that the importance of this type of social responsibility for the security services seems to be crucial. An overview diagram of the responsibility of soldiers, in connection with the performance of their official duties is shown in Figure 4.

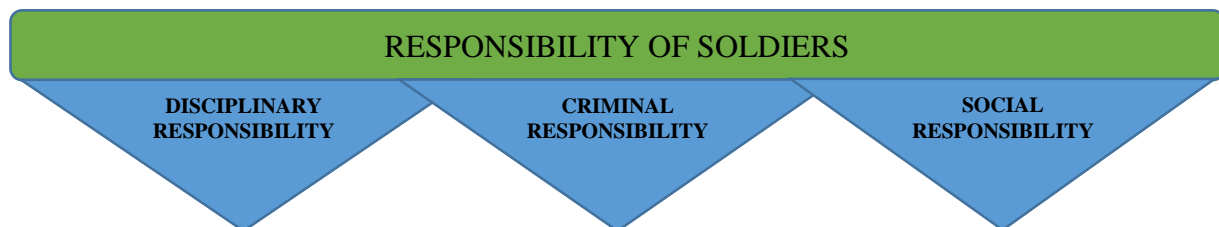


Figure 4. Responsibilities of soldiers in connection with the execution of their official duties.

Source: the author's study.

The above elements should be placed in the area of military discipline as a component of the process of management and command of military personnel, while asking the question - what is the actual purpose of maintaining military discipline and what functions of management (command) it supports or fulfills?

Planning as a function of management is focused on determining the goals of the organization in different time frames (strategic, tactical, operational goals) and developing the best possible (most effective) ways to achieve them. Of particular importance is the establishment of end goals in the organization. as the initial phase to begin planning. With regard to the final goals, intermediate objectives are identified, the methods of proceeding are chosen, the resources needed are identified and the sources of their acquisition are indicated, and the time and place of the anticipated activities are specified. In this way, an operational plan is created which is the final result of planning (Przybyła, 2003, pp. 115-121). In the decision-making process of a military commander, planning is divided into three stages: assessment of the situation, presentation of the intention to act, and development of the action plan and combat order. It is precisely the equivalent of the aforementioned operational plan. The maintenance of executive discipline in this area is enforced by further development of the operational situation, for example, on the battlefield.

Organizing as a function of management involves the formation of the organizational structure, taking into account such aspects as, for example, the division of employee responsibilities (combining various activities, organizing competencies, etc.), defining the hierarchy (separating organizational levels, establishing rules of subordination), organizational formalization (organizational documentation), information ties, procedures of conduct, distribution of decision-making and coordination of activities in time and space. Thus, it includes organizing the organization, integrating the activities occurring in it, and consolidating the rules and procedures in place (Przybyła, Wudarczewski, Koźliński, 1995, pp. 49-121). Formalization and enforceability of executive discipline in this task area is a necessary factor for the smooth and effective functioning of a specific organizational structure (company, battalion, military unit) in terms of the objectives and tasks set.

Motivation (leadership) is a special function. This is because it refers to the desired attitudes and behavior of employees. Motivation is directed, on the one hand, to the recognition of professional and personality qualifications of employees, on the other hand, to the recognition of their needs, aspirations and expectations. On this basis, such a system of influence on employees is developed and such organizational conditions are created that employees engage more fully in the realization of objectives, using and improving their capabilities and qualifications. However, it is important to keep in mind the significant impediments to motivation that arise from the wide variety of qualifications and personalities, the variability of their attitudes and needs, and the limited ability to recognize these elements (Koźliński, Listwan, 1999, pp. 9-13). Following the rules and norms imposed in a military organization should in this case be the result of the commander's influence on the team, flowing from each individual in the team by himself, rather than being an element imposed and held accountable by the governing body. Such conditions increase the efficiency and productivity of the organization, including the military structure.

Control is used by management to check and evaluate whether subordinate organizational structures are performing their tasks, and as a result, allows the detection of irregularities and prevention of adverse phenomena. as a function of management is a special case of evaluation, for which there is a reference in the form of a benchmark. It is a process of comparing facts with benchmarks and drawing conclusions from these comparisons (Kuc, 2009, p. 24). The reference to the role of this function in command as a specific form of management thus seems to be unambiguous - it is a stage following preparation and execution, occupies a larger or smaller time frame, involves the detection of causes of inefficiency (Posobiec, 2013, p. 103). The purpose of control is to improve the quality of command and efficiency in the execution of tasks. The control function is exercised by all commanders, thus verifying the executive discipline of subordinates and correcting or proceeding to create a new operational plan. The place of military discipline in the fulfillment of basic management (command) functions is shown in Figure 5.

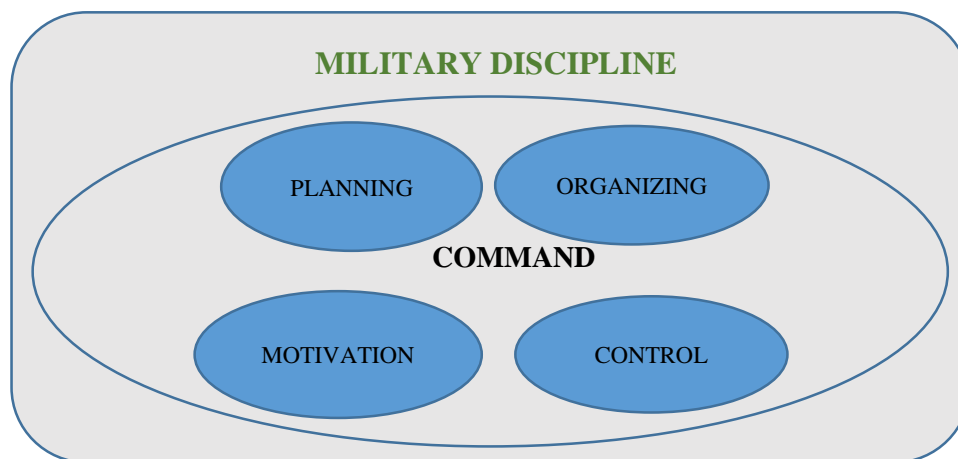


Figure 5. Management functions vs. discipline in the command process.

Source: the author's study.

In conclusion, the creating of discipline in an organization's task force fulfills all the listed management (command) functions. They are carried out by commanders at all levels of command in cycles of organized activities that reflect the command process. Executive discipline, training discipline and military discipline determines the achievement of goals and the realization of tasks at each stage of these cycles, as well as fulfills the mentioned management function.

3. Research methodology

The research was conducted using such methods, techniques and research tools as critical analysis of the literature, individual partially categorized interview, secondary research and logical deduction. The scope was limited to the current largest armed conflict in Ukraine in terms of its scale, location in relation to Poland, and effects on the victims and the region as a whole. The research tool used to conduct the survey among Ukrainian commanders and instructors was a structured interview questionnaire. Sixteen commanders and two instructors directly related to the combat operations of Ukrainian troops in the battle were surveyed using the questionnaire technique. The anonymous interview questionnaire contained 8 questions of various open-ended nature. The questionnaire included optional questions, assuming that not every respondent has enough knowledge to answer all the questions. The following are the results of the study on the identification of key capabilities and competencies of tactical level commanders for success in commanding subordinate task forces.

4. Results

The results of the study show the fundamental importance of leadership and targeting of commanders in leading the team in situations of significant constraints in information, resources, time, and on the other hand under pressure from the enemy and their own soldiers. This confirms the theory of "bounded rationality" in leadership put forward by Simon, which states that it is not possible for a leader to make decisions at an optimal level, but only at a satisfactory level, mainly due to information deficiencies or levels of motivation (Tversky, Kahneman et al., 2000).

In the research process, the author used the interview technique, considering it as enabling to learn about the phenomena occurring in the consciousness of the respondents. Valuable research material obtained during the conducted research by means of an individual interview partially categorized with representatives of the Ukrainian army and Ukrainian experts dealing with security issues, are the conclusions in terms of the desired competencies, capabilities and behaviors of commanders in the process of leadership/command of military personnel, which are as follows:

- essential in battlefield command at the tactical level is maintaining a high level of morale and commitment among subordinate soldiers. During interviews, those interviewed noted a significant increase among soldiers in extreme situations in the level of identification with the team and willingness to make sacrifices. In the case of Ukrainian society, its social stratification and national diversity (according to the official national census of December 5, 2001, Ukraine at that time had a population of 48 457 000 representing 130 nationalities), additionally outlines a significant process of strengthening the national identity of Ukrainian soldiers, the will to strengthen national aspirations, with the further consequence of society developing European and allied aspirations;
- preparation of tactical level commanders should be directed at developing the ability to effectively manage a subdivision during combat operations - the Ukrainian conflict delegates responsibility in combat to lower levels of command - such as squad, platoon, company. The peculiarities of combat operations determined by the impact of the enemy force combat operations to be carried out by small numbers of troops and subunits. As a result, the responsibility for planning, organizing and conducting combat operations comes down to lower-level commanders, in many cases young and inexperienced, although burdened in these situations with considerable responsibility for subordinates and success in combat;

- it is valuable to develop in the process of training commanders the ability to adopt creative and innovative methods of combat - a significant advantage over the enemy is obtained through the ability of commanders to apply innovative equipment solutions and processes for directing combat. Importantly, this applies to modern technologies such as Starlink (this is a system and a constellation of satellites in low Earth orbit. The main purpose is to provide access to telecommunications services, including broadband Internet in areas without infrastructure, for example, in developing countries) or an application using management of reconnaissance information obtained from civilian sources. Also, the use of very simple products or methods known in civilian applications, albeit useful and effective in specific situations of clashing with the enemy, contributes to achieving an advantage in combat;
- important among soldiers is uninterrupted mental and physical resilience - the outstandingly high intensity of operations in adverse living and weather conditions and the difficulty of logistical supply on the front line of combat operations determine the rapid loss of physical capacity over time due to the lack of valuable and regular food, vitamins and minerals. Thus, physical preparation, building the resilience of commanders are again becoming an important part of professional preparation;
- development of leadership competencies and leadership roles by commanders provide a sense of security among fighting soldiers - those interviewed indicated that soldiers feel more secure, show high morale and will to fight in a situation of confident and substantive management by the commander of the team. On the other hand, during the loss of contact with him, there are acts of panic, fleeing, there is information chaos, which is immediately exploited by the enemy;
- important in the context of effectiveness in extremely difficult conditions of conducting combat is the ability to maintain a high level of military discipline in the team - in the stage of increased impact of the enemy, during disparities in equipment resources, information chaos and other factors that have a destabilizing effect on the commander and his subunit, such elements as understanding the purpose of action, trust in the commander and other members of the team, respect for orders and commands, and uninterrupted verbal and non-verbal communication become extremely important. Representatives of the Ukrainian army pointed out that regardless of the level of equipment with modern means of warfare, military training, logistical supplies in the area of operations - it is discipline, morale and willingness to make sacrifices that plays a key role in combat. This area is then the responsibility of the commander, who should be aware of the importance of this element in the process of commanding a human team.

Summarizing the results of the study, it should be stated that the greatest importance in managing the organizational structure of subordinate soldiers during combat in the Ukrainian theater of operations is presented by value-forming competence and mobilization competence. These include the ability to create a vision by the commander, building and sustaining values

(ideas) among soldiers, the ability to mobilize subordinates in the realization of goals, motivating and at the same time maintaining the compactness of the team and forming a high level of executive discipline, the ability to manage combat in a limited area of autonomy, as well as the ability to adapt and create new, non-standard solutions related to robotization and informatization of the modern battlefield. Thus, on the one hand, these are conclusions that previously appeared in separate, individual discussions, as well as completely new ones that should be taken into account in the process of education and training of tactical level commanders in military academies and training centers.

Following up on this research, it becomes rational to prepare training programs and courses for commander candidates in developing the indicated skills and capabilities. In addition, such training should extend to commanders who are already carrying out the tasks of their posts, in the improvement courses dedicated to them.

5. Conclusions

The main purpose of this publication was the cognitive function of identifying capabilities in the area of management competence of military commanders in light of recent experience. The collected research material provided data for the formulation of conclusions regarding the identification of new management competencies of tactical level commanders. As a result of the research, a gap in the hitherto implemented process of preparing future commanders in military universities was identified. By means of deduction and logical inference, the competencies listed in the research results were systematized, identifying value-forming and mobilization competencies as having the greatest importance in managing the organizational structure of subordinate soldiers during combat in the Ukrainian theater of warfare. This is essential in the process of training commanders who will soon be responsible for the security of all citizens. As the results of the research showed, changes in the modern security environment and the imminent threat of warfare necessitate the development of a new, tailored model for the preparation of the modern military commander of the tactical level. The proposals presented are an open set, and should, according to the author, be constantly monitored and periodically updated by the institutions responsible for the process. For there are constant and permanent changes in the conditions in relation to which the commander will carry out management, command and social functions. However, it should be remembered that the activity of every commander is oriented towards the relationship and fulfillment of management functions in relation to another person, more generally to the local community and society as a whole. Adopting such a perspective, the validity of which is confirmed by the experience of the conflict in Ukraine, it is necessary to model the concept of education and training of soldiers in such a way as to strive to equip military personnel with a wide range of competencies,

enabling them to perform during their service not only professional (military) functions, but also social and pedagogical functions. The practical result of the conducted research is the presented proposal for supplementing the competencies of commanders with the listed abilities, which should be taken into account in the process of professional preparation at a military universities or training centers. Unquestionably, research in this area should be continue.

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