

RESPONSIBILITY AND CONSCIENTIOUSNESS OF SOLDIERS

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Abstract:

The aim of the article is to introduce the issues of responsibility and conscientiousness. Its empirical part focuses on the presentation of the results of comparative studies performed among soldiers (n = 62) and civilians (n = 62) with regard to conscientiousness and responsibility. The Sense of Responsibility Scale by Romuald Debris and scales examining conscientiousness from NEO-PI-R questionnaire by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae were used for the study purposes. The results obtained show that, contrary to public opinion, soldiers are not more diligent and responsible than people working in civilian professions. Practical implications were subjected to discussion and further research directions have been proposed.

Keywords:

responsibility, conscientiousness, soldiers

INTRODUCTION

According to the Law on military service “a professional soldier may be a person holding Polish citizenship, having a good reputation, whose fidelity to the Polish Republic of Poland does not raise concerns, having required qualifications and the physical and mental capacity for performing professional military service”¹. Requirements towards people serving in the Armed Forces include: loyalty, discipline and dedication. Such a person must meet not only physical criteria but also psychological ones. A candidate examined by a psychologist must obtain a certificate of no contraindications for military service. General Regulations of the Polish Armed Forces clearly state that “a sol-

¹ Ustawa z dnia 11 września 2003 r. o służbie wojskowej żołnierzy zawodowych, p. 1.



dier is obliged to be disciplined and loyal to other soldiers”². In social perception a soldier is expected to show a specific type of attitudes and behaviors³. Shaping the desired attitudes and behaviors takes place through the achievement of military educational objectives. The realization of such objectives can be carried out by socio-educational impact (a training process, traditions, the community of soldiers, interpersonal relationships) and also by material and physical influences (barracks, uniforms, military technology)⁴. The strict control over the soldier’s behavior encourages the use of numerous and diverse educational activities. It is natural that superiors try to evoke and reinforce these types of behaviors that are desired by the Armed Forces. The Code of Honor of the Polish Army Soldier already in the first paragraphs reads how important responsibility and compliance with commitments (conscientiousness) are. The article presents selected issues regarding conscientiousness and responsibility as well as the results of research conducted among professional soldiers.

1. CONSCIENTIOUSNESS

Conscientiousness, in addition to neuroticism, extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness, is one of the basic personality dimensions highlighted in the popular concept of personality by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae⁵. Conscientiousness is often referred to as “a degree of organization, perseverance and motivation of individuals when performing goal-oriented activities”. A conscientious person is characterized by rationality, orientation towards goals and conviction about his / her competences. High achievements at work result from good organization and a tendency to maintain order, causing that a person is an efficient and effective employee. Features of such persons include dutifulness and proceeding according to their own moral principles. A diligent employee realizes goals set, and the high level of aspiration with the concern for perfection contributes to the success. Discipline and prudence ensure accurate planning for each objective before its execution, while perseverance and a low level of impulsivity give in consequence the successful completion of almost every action⁶.

Studies have shown that conscientious people live longer. This is due to their lifestyle (avoiding drugs, regular exercise and healthy eating), adapting to the doctor's instructions and undergoing regular medical review. What is more, their care is also ad-

² *Regulamin Ogólny Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2014, p. 12.

³ A. Piotrowski, K. Kubacka, *Autorytaryzm a postawy rodzicielskie żołnierzy*, [in:] “Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL”, No. 4(170), 2013, p. 28-47.

⁴ J. Wełyczko, *Środowisko wojskowe jako specyficzne środowisko wychowawcze*, [in:] “Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL”, No. 4(146), 2007, p. 89-102.

⁵ B. Zawadzki, J. Strelau, P. Szczepaniak, M. Śliwińska, *Inwentarz Osobowości NEO-FFI Paula T. Costy Jr i Roberta R. McCrae. Podręcznik*, Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych Polskiego Towarzystwa Psychologicznego. Warszawa 1998, p. 17.

⁶ R. McCrae, P. Costa, *Osobowość dorosłego człowieka: perspektywa teorii pięcioczynnikowej*, Wydawnictwo WAM. Kraków 2005, p. 69-70.



dressed to the environment, which when contaminated could cause damage to health⁷.

Salgado's research on the performance of work by soldiers and civilians showed that conscientiousness and emotional stability are important predictors of behaviors at work and the quality of its execution⁸. Diligence can also be a good predictor of the level of civic behaviors and commitment to work⁹. The high conscientiousness of personnel is associated with greater levels of tasks performance¹⁰ and devotion for work¹¹, numerous civic behaviors in the organization¹² as well as affective involvement in the work¹³.

Muhammad Bhatti shows in his study that conscientiousness has a positive impact on adaptation at work, interpersonal relations and overall achievements¹⁴.

Moreover, it has been proven that conscientiousness is one of the features that allows for the prediction of effects of exercises. Nicholas Vasilopoulos, Jeffrey Cucina and Arwen Hunter carried out studies, which demonstrate that people with high or low conscientiousness achieve lower results in training than those with average intensity of this feature¹⁵.

Conscientiousness is one of the best predictors of quality performance in all occupations and results of training courses. This feature is often overlooked by researches

⁷ L. Pervin, O. John, *Osobowość: teoria i badania*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego. Kraków 2002, p. 284.

⁸ J. Salgado, *Big Five Personality Dimensions and Job Performance in Army and Civil Occupations: A European Perspective*, [in:] "Human Performance", Vol. 11(2/3), 1998, p. 271-288.

⁹ R. Akhtar, L. Boustani, D. Tsvirikos, T. Chamorro-Premuzic, *The engageable personality: Personality and trait EI as predictors of work engagement*, [in:] "Personality and Individual Differences", Vol. 73, 2015, p. 44-49.

¹⁰ N. T. Carter, D. K. Dalal, A. S. Boyce, M. S. O'Connell, M. Kung, K. M. Delgado, *Uncovering Curvilinear Relationships Between Conscientiousness and Job Performance: How Theoretically Appropriate Measurement Makes an Empirical Difference*, [in:] "Journal of Applied Psychology", Vol. 4, 2013, p. 1-23.

¹¹ C. Liu, Y. Liu, M. J. Mills, J. Fan, *Job stressors, job performance, job dedication, and the moderating effect of conscientiousness: A mixed-method approach*, [in:] "International Journal of Stress Management", Vol. 20(4), 2013, p. 336-363.

¹² L. M. Lapierre, R. D. Hackett, *Trait conscientiousness, leader-member exchange, job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviour: A test of an integrative model*, [in:] "Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology", Vol. 80(3), 2007, p. 539-554.

¹³ S. G. Taylor, A. G. Bedeian, D. H. Kluemper, *Linking workplace incivility to citizenship performance: The combined effects of affective commitment and conscientiousness*, [in:] "Journal of Organizational Behavior", Vol. 33(7), 2012, p. 878-893.

¹⁴ M. Bhatti, M. Battour, A. Ismail, V. Sundram, *Effects of personality traits (big five) on expatriates adjustment and job performance*, [in:] "Equality, Diversity and Inclusion: An International Journal", No. 33, 2014, p. 73-96.

¹⁵ N. L. Vasilopoulos, J. M. Cucina, A. E. Hunter, *Personality and training proficiency: Issues of bandwidth-fidelity and curvilinearity*, [in:] "Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology", No. 80, 2007, p. 109-131.



focusing on *agreeableness*; however, *conscientiousness* is what makes it easier to better predict results of work¹⁶.

Paul Costa and Robert McCrae conducted the longitudinal study, which has shown that conscientiousness increases between adolescence and the age of thirty. In turn, results of research carried out by Antonio Terracciano et al prove that the increase of the following features takes place up to 70 years of age. The environment, e.g. adaptation to a workplace in order to conform to the position held or organizational culture, may have a great impact on such changes¹⁷. A diligent soldier would rather increase his / her conscientiousness to preserve his / her self-image in others¹⁸.

Joseph Callister et al examined pilots reporting fear of flying associated with the operational load in a cockpit. They recognized that to a certain extent this is due to poor outcomes in the conscientiousness test.¹⁹ On the other hand, Amy Fitzgibbons et al studied commercial pilots who achieved high scores of *conscientiousness* in the Big Five test²⁰. The Big Five test predicted who from among the U.S. Air Force pilots would complete the training, and conscientiousness and agreeableness proved to be the most important traits²¹. Conscientiousness appeared of great importance when improving professional skills.

Other studies have shown that a senior officer, who is characterized by high *conscientiousness* is more likely to be promoted and would be better judged by his / her superiors²². The personnel of elite special units demonstrate a greater level of *conscientiousness* in comparison with other officers²³.

2. RESPONSIBILITY

The notion of responsibility is derived from Roman law and means self-representation, self-defense before the court²⁴. Nowadays, responsibility is understood as "being liable to a penalty in the event of breach of duty"²⁵.

¹⁶ T. Giluk, *Mindfulness, Big Five personality, and effect: A meta-analysis*, [in:] "Personality and Individual Differences", No. 47, 2009, p. 805-811.

¹⁷ A. Terracciano, R. R. McCrae, L. J. Brant, P. T. Costa Jr., *Hierarchical linear modeling analysis of the NEO-PI-R scales in the Baltimore longitudinal study of the aging*, [in:] "Psychology and Aging", Vol. 20(3), 2005, p. 493-506.

¹⁸ R. Grice, *Personality Profiles of Experienced U.S. Army Rotary-Wing Aviators Across Mission Platforms*, Liberty University. Lynchburg 2006, p. 37.

¹⁹ J. D. Callister, R. E. King, P. D. Retzlaff, R. W. Marsh, *Using the NEO-PI-R to Assess the Personality of US Air Force Pilots*, Clinical Sciences Division, Neuropsychiatry Branch. Brooks Air Force Base 1997, p.46.

²⁰ A. Fitzgibbons, D. Davis, P. C. Schutte, *Pilot personality profile using the NEO PI-R*, National Aeronautics and Space Administration Langley Research Centre. Hampton 2004.

²¹ R. Grice, *Personality Profiles of Experienced U.S. Army Rotary-Wing Aviators Across Mission Platforms*, Liberty University. Lynchburg 2006.

²² L. McCormack, D. Mellor, *The Role of Personality in Leadership: An Application of the Five-Factor Model in the Australian Military*, [in:] „Military Psychology”, Vol. 14(3), 2002, p. 179-197.

²³ A. Piotrowski, *Grupy Interwencyjne Służby Więziennej. Pasja czy służba?* [in:] "Przegląd Naukowo-Metodyczny. Edukacja dla Bezpieczeństwa", Vol. 4(25), 2014, p. 271-285.

²⁴ J. Gorniewicz, *Kategorie pedagogiczne: odpowiedzialność, podmiotowość, samorealizacja, tolerancja, twórczość, wyobraźnia*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej. Warszawa 1997, p. 13.



According to Kazimierz Sośnicki three types of responsibility can be distinguished: *physical* - responsibility for doing an act, *psychological* - that occurs when the actions arise from personality traits, and *moral*, which concerns possible situations²⁶.

Responsibility is one of the features that appeared in Krystyna Skarżyńska's study of hierarchy of parental values. In the group of mothers this value was in third place, while fathers positioned it fourth (out of thirteen). Furthermore, parents recognized responsibility as one of the conditions for success.²⁷ Among the characteristics of the Polish "good officer", responsibility was placed second as the most important personality trait²⁸.

The identification of someone's place in an event has a significant impact on the sense of responsibility. It will be larger when this position is recognized, and much lower when the situation involves persons considered as more obliged to react. When all the participants are in the same position the phenomenon of the diffusion of responsibility may appear, that means reducing the opportunity to response (even if the attribution of responsibility takes place) with a larger number of people participating in a given situation. However, it should be borne in mind that this phenomenon makes it possible to avoid the cost of reaction²⁹. According to Ervin Staub "taking responsibility" has its origins in childhood³⁰. It is when this tendency is shaped as a result of delegating responsibility for the good of other people³¹.

The Duval-Wicklund³² theory postulates the impact of the self-awareness on the sense of responsibility. Higher self-awareness is accompanied by a greater sense of responsibility for the success or failure than in the case of low self-awareness. The hypothesis has been confirmed by Jerald Greenberg's³³ studies, in which participants had to recognize numbers and assign awards to particular groups (depending on the merits). The findings of the research allow for the conclusion that the fair behavior is modified by

²⁵ W. Witwicki, *Psychologia tom II*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1963, p. 266.

²⁶ K. Sośnicki, *Teoria środków wychowania*, NK. Warszawa 1973, p. 83.

²⁷ K. Skarżyńska, *Konformizm i samokierowanie jako wartości (struktura i źródła)*, Instytut Psychologii PAN, Warszawa 1991, p. 98-99.

²⁸ R. Stępień, *Współczesne alternatywy wychowawcze w wojsku – regres czy postęp*, [in:] *Kształcenie obywatelskie w siłach zbrojnych*, (ed.) K. Radwa, Wydawnictwo Volumen. Warszawa 1997, p. 18.

²⁹ J. Reykowski, *Motywacja, postawy prospołeczne a osobowość*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1986, p. 344-346.

³⁰ E. Staub, *The development of prosocial behavior in children*, Morrision General Learning Press. New York 1975, p. 74.

³¹ J. Reykowski, *Motywacja, postawy prospołeczne a osobowość*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1986, p. 394.

³² S. Duval, R. Wicklund, *Theory of objective self-awareness*, Academic Press. New York 1972, p. 57.

³³ J. Greenberg, *Attentional Focus and Locum of performance causality as determinants of equality behavior*, [in:] "Journal of Personality and Social Psychology", No. 38, 1980, p. 569-585.



self-awareness and the sense of responsibility - the increased reward for success and decreased for a failure³⁴.

The research performed by Shelley Duval and Robert Wicklund³⁵ showed that self-focused persons tend to admit their own responsibility in positive situations, while other persons' (or circumstances) responsibility when an adverse event occurs³⁶.

Dieter Frey³⁷ in his study presents evidences showing differences in the attribution of responsibility. People attribute to themselves much more responsibility in the case of public failure rather than anonymous. What is more, it can be expected that this standard of internal justice will be decisive. Its high level will cause that an individual will attribute to himself / herself responsibility equally for a negative and positive situation, and public or anonymous conditions will not affect the attribution³⁸.

The sense of responsibility can be talked about "if someone fulfills duty while being aware of possible punishment, and in the case of commitment of an offense he / she accepts a penalty without protest, or even demands it"³⁹. The sense of responsibility may be simulated, it is easiest to simulate in front of own conscience. Such behavior can occur when a person is not afraid of consequences, and only wants to escape the hostility of society. Trustworthy people are those with "proven conscientiousness" and the real high sense of the responsibility. The common expression regarding taking responsibility for something is empty words, since a person saying them usually does not believe in possible negative effects of their conduct⁴⁰.

The problem of conscientiousness and responsibility has already found its place in psychological literature. There are no empirical findings of the level of conscientiousness and responsibility in soldiers. It is very important that our Armed Forces are still in the professionalization phase.

Developing qualities such as conscientiousness and responsibility is consistent with the development and shaping of civic attitudes among the personnel of the Armed Forces. The study shows that through the impact of military service the soldiers note substantial modification of their own behaviors related to discipline, proper understanding of responsibilities and citizenship⁴¹. Military service and the effective application of edu-

³⁴ Z. Zaborowski, *Psychospołeczne problemy sprawiedliwości i równości*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1986, p. 103.

³⁵ S. Duval, R. Wicklund, *Theory of objective self-awareness*, Academic Press, New York 1972.

³⁶ Z. Zaborowski, *Psychospołeczne problemy sprawiedliwości i równości*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1986, p. 167.

³⁷ D. Frey, *Reactions to success and failure in public and private conditions*, [in:] "Journal of Experimental Social Psychology" Vol. 14, 1978, p. 172-179.

³⁸ Z. Zaborowski, *Psychospołeczne problemy sprawiedliwości i równości*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1986, p. 168.

³⁹ W. Witwicki, *Psychologia tom II*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe. Warszawa 1963, p. 266.

⁴⁰ Ibidem, p. 266.

⁴¹ Z. R. Stępień, *Współczesne alternatywy wychowawcze w wojsku – regres czy postęp*, [in:] *Kształcenie obywatelskie w siłach zbrojnych*, (ed.) K. Radwa, Wydawnictwo Volumen. Warszawa 1997, p. 13.



cational methods shape the personality of soldiers. A great number of studies in the field of military andragogy have been devoted to this issue⁴². In each state possessing an army, beside schools it is the largest educating and upbringing institution⁴³. The military is one of the specific institutions, in which the process of education and upbringing is included in the list of statutory tasks.

The sociological literature has already described the role model of a professional soldier⁴⁴. This study attempts to reflect in psychological terms on soldiers' conscientiousness and responsibility.

3. METHODOLOGICAL RESEARCH BASIS

Aim of the research:

The aim of the research was to determine whether significant differences exist in the level of responsibility and conscientiousness of soldiers compared to persons employed in civilian professions.

The research sample:

The research covered two groups of men, consisting 62 people each. The study group included professional active soldiers, aged 21 - 51 years (M = 33.44, SD = 6.8). The control group consisted of men working in corporations or private companies, aged 21 - 51 years (M = 32.12, SD = 7.07).

Research tools:

The Sense of Responsibility Scale by Romuald Debris⁴⁵ and scales examining *conscientiousness* from NEO-PI-R questionnaire by Paul Costa and Robert McCrae⁴⁶ were used in the studies.

4. RESULTS

It was investigated whether the soldiers and civilians vary at the level of the sense of responsibility and conscientiousness. The data obtained are provided in Table 1.

The analyses carried out indicate that soldiers and civilians do not vary from each other as far as the level of responsibility is concerned. Of all the components of *conscientiousness* differences (in favor of civilians) can be seen in the subscales: *competence* and *the pursuit of achievements*. Persons working in private companies or corporations have statistically significantly higher scores compared with soldiers. The overall result

⁴² J. Tomiło, *Wprowadzenie do wychowania do odpowiedzialności*, [in:] *Vademecum dydaktyczno-wychowawcze 6*, (ed.) M. Kaliński, MON. Warszawa 1996, p. 190-200.

⁴³ K. Klimek, *Oficer jako nauczyciel dorosłych*, [in:] *Vademecum dydaktyczno-wychowawcze 6*, (ed.) M. Kaliński, MON. Warszawa 1996, p. 203.

⁴⁴ J. Maciejewski, *Grupy dyspozycyjne. Analiza socjologiczna*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego. Wrocław 2012.

⁴⁵ R. Derbis, *Skala poczucia odpowiedzialności*, Wydawnictwo Wyższej Szkoły Pedagogicznej. Częstochowa 1993.

⁴⁶ P. T. Costa Jr, R. R. McCrae, *Inwentarz Osobowości NEO-PI-R*, Pracownia Testów Psychologicznych Polskiego Towarzystwa Psychologicznego. Warszawa 2006.



of conscientiousness in the group of tested soldiers is lower than in the group of civilians (at the statistical trend level). The performed statistical analysis proved that soldiers, contrary to what is claimed, as well as intensive educational activities, do not reach higher levels of conscientiousness and responsibility than civilian work

Table 1. The comparison of the level of soldiers' and civilians' responsibility and conscientiousness

Variables	Soldiers		Civilians		Test of mean change significance				Test of variance homogeneity		
	M	SD	M	SD	t	Df	P	D	F	df1;df2	p
Responsibility	22,24	4,66	22,87	3,13	0,882	106,68	0,380	0,18	9,23	1;122	0,003
Competences	20,39	4,72	22,50	4,41	2,575	122	0,011	0,57	0,02	1;122	0,883
Propensity for order	19,87	4,63	20,73	5,02	0,986	122	0,326	0,23	0,16	1;122	0,692
Dutifulness	23,60	4,55	24,87	4,50	1,568	122	0,119	0,35	0,00	1;122	0,949
Pursuit of achievements	20,52	4,25	22,13	4,06	2,160	122	0,033	0,48	0,48	1;122	0,492
Self-discipline	20,85	4,49	21,92	4,61	1,302	122	0,195	0,30	0,06	1;122	0,807
Prudence	18,02	4,95	17,26	5,55	0,803	122	0,424	0,19	0,55	1;122	0,461
Conscientiousness total	123,24	21,62	130,16	21,43	1,790	122	0,076	0,44	0,11	1;122	0,744

Source: own study

CONCLUSION

In the search for the interpretation of the results obtained, some possible reasons for the lack of differences between the groups in terms of the measured variables can be indicated. People working in private enterprises and corporations are more at risk of unemployment than professional soldiers. Civilians cope much better on a more competitive labor market; this is why their level of competence and the pursuit of achievements are higher than soldiers'. In a private enterprise it is also easier to get a promotion than in the military, where the possibility of promotion is limited due to the number of positions (more than half of the soldiers have not been promoted five years). According to the research conducted by Marian Kloczkowski soldiers are least satisfied with promotional opportunities to a higher rank and to a higher position, as



well as career prospects⁴⁷. Those who work in private companies are likely to have a higher level of education than soldiers. It happens very often that the military profession is the choice due to the unavailability of other offers in the labor market. The level of recruitment and the quality of education impacts in the Armed Forces should be also considered when analyzing the results obtained.

Currently, there is a professional army in Poland, which means that volunteers apply to join it. Therefore, there should be selected such persons, who guarantee their full involvement in the execution of duties.

Consciousness and responsibility are qualities that are formed in the course of socialization. A worker / soldier appears at the place of work / service with a certain level of those features, which, however, can be further shaped and strengthened by the organizational culture. Regardless of whether it is a private company or the military. As written by Lesław Węlyczko: "the end result, which is the product of the educational process implemented in the Armed Forces, to the greatest extent depends primarily on teachers / commanders"⁴⁸. The question remains open: Is the revealed level of soldiers' conscientiousness and responsibility satisfactory in the opinion of the commanding staff? It is possible that future studies with the use of these research tools during the recruitment and in the course of later service, together with the obtained results summarized with the assessment of the level of duties exercised would give more practical guidance on the selection of educational methods towards soldiers.

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⁴⁷ M. Kloczkowski, *Orientacje zawodowe kadry zawodowej*, [in:] *Společne aspekty zwođu wojskowego w badaniach empirycznych Wojskowego Biura Badań Społecznych*, (ed.) A. Orzyłowska, Wojskowe Centrum Edukacji Obywatelskiej. Warszawa 2009, p. 11-24.

⁴⁸ L. Węlyczko, *Środowisko wojskowe jako specyficzne środowisko wychowawcze*, [in:] "Zeszyty Naukowe WSOWL", Vol. 4(146), 2007, p. 100. p. 89-102.



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