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**EMOTIONAL, SITUATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL
AWARENESS - AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF
MILITARY TEAM LEADERSHIP EFFICIENCY**

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Abstract:

This study aims to investigate the way in which emotional, situational and multicultural awareness influences the efficiency of activities related to military team leadership in the dynamic conditions specific to complex military missions. The present study inserts emotional, situational and multicultural awareness into the larger scope of emotional intelligence which has been widely studied by us in our own research in 2008 when we identified factorial solutions of emotional intelligence in navy students and officers' personality.

Key words: emotional awareness, situational awareness, multicultural awareness, emotional intelligence, efficiently military team leadership.

1. Rationale

There are numerous explanatory - interpretative models that try to define leadership in small and medium-sized groups, the emphasis moving from leadership as a polysemic notion, often understood as management, to effective leadership and excellence building (Leadership Effectiveness). We agree on the systemic-psychosocial approach of team leadership laying stress on the personality of the military leader, on the complexity of the situations arising from specific military missions, on the features of military groups similar to the social micro groups, and especially on relations of interaction, interdependence, inter influence, compensation and feedback existing between the variables of the organizing, integrating system, - the military team leadership. Therefore, military leadership can be defined as the action by which a social actor – i.e. the military leader – produces attitudinal and behavioral changes in his subordinates so as to make them achieve the objectives of the military missions or organizations as a whole, depending on the requirements and features of the given context.

This requires training of psychosocial skills of military leaders at group, operational or strategic level, since it is well-known that the “raw material” of leadership is people; it is through people and with people that the technical means can be handled.

2. Emotional, situational, multicultural awareness - an essential condition for efficient military team leadership

It is self-evident that it is not necessary to add more about the emotional, situational, and multicultural awareness, and its importance in the command and control act or in the efficient military leadership that contain a varied set of roles: to decide, to negotiate, to motivate, to integrate. “The Conscious Paradigm States” (Hobson, Strickgold, 1995 in

EMOTIONAL, SITUATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS - AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF MILITARY TEAM LEADERSHIP EFFICIENCY

Endsley, 2004) argues that individual experiences of consciousness differ during the day depending on how the functional organization of neural networks of the brain changes, so the states of consciousness can be considered as both substrate having neurophysiologic and psychological substrate. Ordinary general awareness, characterized by awareness and lucidity of the psyche, as a result of the flooding of the sensory cortex with messages is located in the right hemisphere of the brain, (“analogous brain”) i.e. cortex where the nerve centers of imagination, empathy, intuition and orientation in time and space can be found. The right hemisphere, opposite in significance to the left hemisphere (which is pure rationality) is more creative, more insight based.

We will try to introduce emotional awareness within the broader emotional intelligence area, since the two concepts share similarities of content. If for Mayer and Salovey (1995), self-awareness involves “nonreactive attention and lack of judgment on the inner state”, emotional intelligence implies the ability to correctly perceive emotions and to express them, the ability to access or generate feelings when they facilitate thinking, the ability to know and understand emotions and to adjust them in order to promote emotional and intellectual development.

The authors cited above revealed several levels of emotional intelligence training: assessing the perception and expression of emotion; emotional facilitation of thinking; understanding and analyzing emotions; regulate emotions to promote emotional and intellectual development. In another line of investigation, of R. Bar-On (1997), the components of emotional intelligence related to emotional awareness point to the intrapersonal aspect (emotional self-awareness, optimism and assertiveness, self-esteem, self-realization and independence), interpersonal aspects (empathy, interpersonal relationships mutually positive, social stress tolerance, impulse control), and general mood (happiness, optimism). According to Bar-On, emotional intelligence includes skills grouped by areas: self-awareness of their own emotions, mastering emotions, inner motivation, empathy, establishing and managing relationships. An interesting and challenging perspective is provided by Jeanne Segal (1999) which highlights four components of emotional intelligence with reference to emotional self-awareness: emotional awareness, acceptance, active emotional awareness, empathy. An invaluable contribution is made by Daniel Goleman (2001) which lists similar constructs: self-awareness, self-control, motivation, empathy, social skills. This is what Goleman means by “own effectiveness”.

Indeed, “own effectiveness” is the essential requirement for a military leader to determine the effectiveness of leadership in the military group: good emotional self-control, realistic, clear and creative thinking, managing stress and constant change, making the right decision, self-motivation, motivating the subordinates to achieve mission objectives, good communication skills, good management of interpersonal relationships, display of self-confidence, and confidence in subordinates, empathy.

Situational awareness is studied primarily in the context of military leadership, of military command and control operations requiring rapid response, of complex military tasks under time pressure, where the dynamic of information flow and decision making is very high and where making a decision can lead to consequences on which survival depends. The military leader consciously perceives the situational time – space coordinates in a continual change, having a certain kind of intuition, to understand how information, events, own decisions will affect the subordinate military group and the mission objectives on short and medium term.

Specialty literature describes numerous attempts to conceptualize situational awareness. A widely accepted definition of situational awareness in science was launched

EMOTIONAL, SITUATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS - AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF MILITARY TEAM LEADERSHIP EFFICIENCY

by Endsley (1995): “the perception of elements in the environment within a volume of time and space, the comprehension of their meaning, and the projection of their status in the near future”, a definition involving the synthetic perception of information from the environment, understanding their significance and prediction in time and space according to the variables that change, and goals of military operations, aiming at the adaptation to the objective reality.

Other definitions of situational awareness aim at similar fields: “situational awareness is a state achieved when information that is qualitatively and quantitatively determined by given configuration as suitable for assumed role is made available to stakeholder by engaging them in appropriate information exchange patterns” (Soratia, 2008) or “the ability to maintain a constant, clear mental picture of relevant information and the tactical situation including friendly and threat as well as terrain” (Dostal, 2007). Dostal (2007) brings further clarification: “In the context of military command and control applications, situational understanding refers to the product of Applying Analysis and Judgment to the unit's situation awareness to determine the relationships of the factors present and form logical conclusions concerning threats to the force or mission accomplishment, opportunities for mission accomplishment, and gaps in information”.

Assessment of situational awareness is a dynamic and continual process involving all members of the military (physical and mental health, personality, attitudes) through a common mental representation of the military situation, which Glaser (1989) and Kozlowski (1998) called a common mental model: “a set of well-defined, highly-organized yet dynamic knowledge structures developed over time from experience”. In this context, situation awareness is viewed as “a state of knowledge”, and situational assessment as “the processes” used to achieve that item of knowledge. This perspective explains the crucial importance of situational awareness in decision making by military leaders based on the experience, knowledge, and instruction of the subordinates.

Another important conceptual distinction in situational awareness is bringing the debate sense making by opposition, as “a motivated, continuous effort to understand connections (which can be among people, places, and events) in order to anticipate their trajectories and act effectively” (Klein et al., 2006, p 71). Endsley (2004) also points out that sense making is backward focused, forming reasons for past events, while situation awareness is typically forward looking, projecting what is likely to happen in order to inform effective decision processes

Based on these assertions, Endsley (2001) developed a theoretical model of situational awareness which involves three important stages: the first stage refers to the perception the status, attributes, and dynamics of relevant elements in the environment. The second stage is comprehension as a process of pattern recognition, interpretation, and evaluation, integrating the information to understand how it will affect the individual's or group's goals and objectives. This includes developing a comprehensive picture of the world, or of that portion of the world of concern to the individual. The last projection stage, as the highest level of situational awareness, involves the ability to project the future actions of the elements in the environment. The model gives rise to other variables that can influence the development and maintenance of situational awareness, including individual actions, characteristic tasks, surrounding environment, time and space variables.

For the efficiency of military team leadership, it is not enough that only the military leader has a personality with high levels of emotional or situational awareness, but also subordinates team conducting military mission objectives.

Endsley (1995, p.39) defines group situational awareness as “the degree to which every team member possesses the SA required for his or her responsibilities”.

EMOTIONAL, SITUATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS - AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF MILITARY TEAM LEADERSHIP EFFICIENCY

It is natural to be so, because the military relations between members of the group are interdependent and coordinated, focused on meeting common goals and objectives; there exists a well-articulated network of hierarchical statuses and roles for each member of the group with a well specified role. The success of the missions depends on teamwork, on the high level of situational awareness of each member, on the fulfillment of each individual objective of subordinates, so as to meet the overall objective of the group. Moreover, the above cited author uses the inspired phrase of “shared situational awareness” just to mean “the degree to which team members possess the same SA on shared SA requirement” (Endsley & Jones, 2001, p 48). In this way, shared situational awareness becomes an essential function of cooperation, collaboration, cohesion of military group members who share a common understanding and interpretation of complex tasks elements. As the military group works hierarchically, not all members of the group should possess all the information (as it will be dysfunctional and redundant), but only those relevant to individual tasks.

Endsley and Jones (2001) developed a team situational model with four important factors: requirements (the extent to which group members know which information should be shared, which their current tasks are), devices (how to transmit information: direct communication, technology), mechanisms (shared mental models that facilitate common understanding, coordination), and processes (effective engagement in carrying out of the objectives: checking correctness of the information, prioritizing tasks, coordination, establishment of joint plans). This helps the military leader in training, and development of a cohesive, performance and objective-centered team.

The need for a high level of situational awareness is revealed in the correct decisions made by the military leader in a strictly limited time, based on the information of the decision maker on the specific situation. Experience has shown that maintaining a high level of situational awareness is not necessary in routine situations, in the execution of common tasks, as it can lead to mental fatigue, overloading tasks and errors. This is required in new, unusual, or unpredictable situations.

International military missions are a new challenge for the military leader who leads a multicultural military team - multicultural awareness. Multicultural awareness involves the ability to lead good interpersonal relations within all members of the multinational military, regardless of their cultural, religious, ethnic traditions, customs, gender and sexual orientation, or socio-economic status. Multicultural awareness involves dialogue with the otherness, respecting the other without sending out judgments with reference to value or axiology. In order to build a cohesive and successful multicultural team with an invigorating, positive work environment, the military leader is to influence subordinates in the spirit of multicultural awareness. The psychosocial means by which the military leader influences his subordinates are extremely complex and subtle, and this takes place at the level of the cognitive, affective, motivational subsystems and especially at the level of the attitude subsystem. We understand the procedural dynamics of the influence more deeply as we define attitudes as predispositions to react in a certain way to a class of objects, actions and social situations. Also, if we consider attitudes as " interfaces" between personality and military socio-professional environment, we can say that they are depositaries of values, knowledge, assimilated cultural traditions, motivations and personal experiences which are structured as vectors that generate a general predisposition, relatively stable and consistent; this leads to a certain behavior, which is adjusting to the multicultural objective reality, in times of peace, crisis or war.

EMOTIONAL, SITUATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS - AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF MILITARY TEAM LEADERSHIP EFFICIENCY

Applied to students and officers of the navy, our own research (Cojocaru, 2008) identified factors of emotional intelligence in the junior students' personological profile, as well as in imminent graduates and officers of the navy.

Thus, the junior navy students' factorial solution identifies, for the emotional intelligence factor, in the structure of a set of eight variables of high and very high saturation 3 components of emotional intelligence – the Bar-On Empathy (.74), social skills (.76) and Emotional Awareness (.72) - 3 empathetic values - Emotional Empathy (.74), Cognitive Empathy (.80), and Predictive Empathy (.76) - a personality trait - Socialization (.74), and a variable in the field of general intelligence - Verbal Intelligence (.70).

When students graduate, the set of eight components of emotional intelligence placed in the starting matrix is added to the structure factor of emotional intelligence of medium-high and high saturation: the Segal Empathy (.78), the Bar-On Empathy (.77), Socialization (.76), Social Skills (.71), Emotional Awareness (.60), Verbal Intelligence (.81), Figural Intelligence (.78), Intellective Brilliance (.70)

Finally, the factorial solution for the emotional intelligence of the navy officers does not represent a formal or reproductive continuation of the solution for students, but a factorial solution with new elements: Realism (.80), Sociability (.77), Optimism (.75) Emotional Awareness (.72), Social skills (.68), the Segal Empathy (.64), the Bar-On Empathy (.59) and Emotional Control (.47).

The special importance of emotional intelligence, of emotional, situational and multicultural awareness respectively, lies in the fact that this is a key point in achieving leadership effectiveness; it requires training and practice of these skills in the educational – instructional process of the military.

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***EMOTIONAL, SITUATIONAL AND MULTICULTURAL AWARENESS -
AN ESSENTIAL CONDITION OF MILITARY TEAM LEADERSHIP
EFFICIENCY***

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