

Possibilities of Psychodiagnostics in the Context of Highly Challenging Situations in Military Leadership

Authors : Markéta Chmelíková, David Ullrich, Iva Burešová

Abstract : The paper maps the possibilities and limits of diagnosing selected personality and performance characteristics of military leadership and psychology students in the context of coping with challenging situations. Individuals vary greatly inter-individually in their ability to effectively manage extreme situations, yet existing diagnostic tools are often criticized mainly for their low predictive power. Nowadays, every modern army focuses primarily on the systematic minimization of potential risks, including the prediction of desirable forms of behavior and the performance of military commanders. The context of military leadership is well known for its life-threatening nature. Therefore, it is crucial to research stress load in the specific context of military leadership for the purpose of possible anticipation of human failure in managing extreme situations of military leadership. The aim of the submitted pilot study, using an experiment of 24 hours duration, is to verify the possibilities of a specific combination of psychodiagnostic to predict people who possess suitable equipment for coping with increased stress load. In our pilot study, we conducted an experiment of 24 hours duration with an experimental group (N=13) in the bomb shelter and a control group (N=11) in a classroom. Both groups were represented by military leadership students (N=11) and psychology students (N=13). Both groups were equalized in terms of study type and gender. Participants were administered the following test battery of personality characteristics: Big Five Inventory 2 (BFI-2), Short Dark Triad (SD-3), Emotion Regulation Questionnaire (ERQ), Fatigue Severity Scale (FSS), and Impulsive Behavior Scale (UPPS-P). This test battery was administered only once at the beginning of the experiment. Along with this, they were administered a test battery consisting of the Test of Attention (d2) and the Bourdon test four times overall with 6 hours ranges. To better simulate an extreme situation - we tried to induce sleep deprivation - participants were required to try not to fall asleep throughout the experiment. Despite the assumption that a stay in an underground bomb shelter will manifest in impaired cognitive performance, this expectation has been significantly confirmed in only one measurement, which can be interpreted as marginal in the context of multiple testing. This finding is a fundamental insight into the issue of stress management in extreme situations, which is crucial for effective military leadership. The results suggest that a 24-hour stay in a shelter, together with sleep deprivation, does not seem to simulate sufficient stress for an individual, which would be reflected in the level of cognitive performance. In the context of these findings, it would be interesting in future to extend the diagnostic battery with physiological indicators of stress, such as: heart rate, stress score, physical stress, mental stress ect.

Keywords : bomb shelter, extreme situation, military leadership, psychodiagnostic

Conference Title : ICMP 2023 : International Conference on Military Psychology

Conference Location : Rome, Italy

Conference Dates : February 20-21, 2023