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***Personal resources of Polish soldiers serving in foreign military missions.***

**ABSTRACT**

Rapid changes in terms of the perception of peace for global and local security mean that the Polish Army is becoming more important while functioning within NATO structures. One of the many tasks of Polish soldiers includes participation in military operations and stabilization missions in areas of armed conflict. This means performing tasks in difficult conditions, in situations of a threat to health and life.

Taking into account the past experience, it can be stated that the Polish soldier proved himself in difficult situations, showing a high level of professionalism, responsibility, and determination in the performance of the tasks assigned to him. Thus, he was a reliable link in allied operations, often in conditions which pose a risk to life and health. The success of the mission was primarily determined by the personal resources of the participants of these missions since the key role was always played by a human, his knowledge, and skills, a sense of coherence allowing the real assessment of the situation and threats, faith in own capabilities, high motivation of service, a sense of authorship, and the ability to deal with problems, as well as a sense of social support. Therefore, the subject of this thesis was to determine the personal resources of participants in foreign military operations and compare them with the resources of soldiers without this war experience. Thus, the thesis aimed at determining the role of service conditions in shaping these resources.

The empirical research carried out in the quantitative paradigm included comparative analyses of the particular resources of surveyed veterans of foreign military missions (basic group) and soldiers experienced only in service in peaceful conditions (comparison group). Research interests included professional competences, a sense of coherence, self-esteem of the respondents, their motivation for professional achievements, a sense of control over service situation, styles of coping with stress, and social support. The adopted research

strategy allowed to solve the main research problem, verify the general working hypothesis, and to find answers to specific questions. Solving the research problems posed, first the general results of the analyzed variables were compared and then the detailed variables were taken into consideration. Furthermore, the variables related to veterans of foreign military missions were correlated, taking into account demographic and social factors.

The structure of the dissertation consists of four chapters, of which the first two present the theoretical foundations of the research process, while the third and fourth present the methodology of own research as well as discuss and interpret the obtained research results. The thesis ends with a conclusion, bibliography, table of tables and charts, and an appendix including research tools used for the purpose of this study.

The first chapter presents the essence of military service and the characteristics of various types of military forces constituting the core of the Polish Army. Moreover, the legal grounds and a framework for the participation of the Polish Army in foreign missions as well as their actual participation in various regions of the world were also presented. The participation of Polish soldiers in the Military Contingent in Korea in 1953, in Egypt in 1973–1979, in the Balkans in the 90s of the last century, in the IFOR, SFOR, KFOR Implementation Forces, and the Polish Military Contingent in Iraq and Afghanistan was analyzed more closely. In addition to the role and tasks performed by Polish soldiers, the issues of recruitment for service abroad, professional preparation before leaving for missions, and the characteristics of tasks carried out, as well as difficult situations in service outside the country, especially in the area of ongoing military operations were discussed.

The second chapter was devoted to determining the personal resources of soldiers. The characteristics of these resources were based on the literature on the subject. The concept of personal resources was defined, their role in the professional functioning of the soldier, and their selected dimensions were specified. Describing professional competences, an overview of various concepts was carried out, with particular attention to the aspects necessary for professional military service in the context of achieving the highest levels of professionalism. What is more, the concept of coherence and its components constituting the basis of empirical research was characterized. The role of self-assessment as a factor stimulating activity, determining individual capabilities of coping, especially in difficult situations, was presented. Various approaches to the motivation for professional achievements and a sense of locating control were analyzed as a source of individual pursuit of high performance in service and professional success. An essential complement to the discussion is to present various strategies and styles of coping with stress as well as the issue of social support in the context

of help for people in difficult situations, which is a high psychological burden for the individual.

The third chapter presents the methodological basis of own research, including the subject and purpose of the research as well as the main research problem, and the general working hypothesis, detailed research questions. Furthermore, the applied method, techniques, and research tools were characterized, which were used in order to gather empirical data enabling the verification of the assumptions made. The organization and area of research were also discussed. The methods of statistical analysis were presented, which were subordinated to the main objective and research problems of the thesis. This part ends with the characteristics of the people surveyed.

The fourth chapter presents the analysis of collected empirical data. It includes comparisons of both the overall results of the analyzed variables of personal resources of the participants of foreign military operations as well as soldiers of the comparison group and the analysis of detailed variables describing these resources. It also includes comparisons of professional competences, a sense of coherence, self-esteem, motivation for professional achievements, a sense of locating control, styles of coping with social stress, and social support. While the data analysis was made starting from detailed to general variables, their presentation was the opposite. First, the overall results were presented and then the detailed variables were compared.

Solving the main research problem and verifying the general working hypothesis, it turned out that only some of the adopted assumptions were confirmed. In general, the average evaluations of soldiers regarding the analysed personal resources were prevailing. These resources were more often evaluated higher by soldiers who did not confront their knowledge, skills and formed dispositions with war conditions of service, functioning in extreme conditions, in situations of a frequent threat to health and life. Therefore, only the actual service in war conditions is a test of the preparation of soldiers for foreign military operations, and the experience gained in this field allows to reasonably assess their personal resources. It turned out that there are significant differences in terms of the overall assessment of personal resources such as self-esteem, motivation for professional achievements, styles of coping with stress, and some aspects of social support. Higher levels of general self-esteem are presented by soldiers who did not serve outside the country, and in stressful situations, they look for social contacts more often than veterans. Research results indicate that they also have a greater demand for social approval than veterans of foreign missions. However, a much higher level of professional motivation is shown by soldiers who served in war conditions with danger to their life or health.

They also, more often than soldiers serving in the country, use a style focused on emotions or avoiding through performing substitute activities in difficult and stressful situations. They also show greater demand for social support and more often seek this support than soldiers from the comparison group. Research results indicate that there are no significant differences between veterans and soldiers who did not serve in foreign military missions in the context of self-assessment of professional competences, a sense of coherence, a sense of control in the work situation as well as in terms of focusing on a task in a stressful situation, and general social support. The analyzed variables in both groups of soldiers are mainly at the average level. According to the conducted correlative analysis of the examined variables related to veterans of foreign missions with demographic and social factors, it turned out that mainly such aspects as age, length of military service, a position occupied, and garrison size significantly differentiated the examined personal resources of soldiers.

In the conclusion, reference was made to the purpose of the research, research problems, and the formulated working hypothesis. Therefore, findings from the research as well as practical conclusions implying the recruitment and training processes of soldiers to serve outside the country in military operations were included.

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