

PSYCHOLOGICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF MILITARY LEADERSHIP

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Abstract

This paper explores positive psychological characteristics of military leadership. The military in this paper is used to embrace all the armed forces of a country. In Nigeria, the armed forces include the army, the Air force and the Navy. As a very formal organization rules and order are strict and roles are not discretionary. Certain characteristics have been posited as germane for effective leadership in the military; firm and disciplined behaviour, ability to take decision and influence subordinates to key into same. Ability to enforce Conformity and obedience to the military authority and to punish defaulters also constitute very important role. The Big five personality model was used to evaluate the personality of military leaders, among the five models; openness to experience was posited by the author as requisite for military operations and duties. These characteristics in line with military ethos are cardinal to fostering and facilitating military efficiency.

Keywords: Psychological Characteristics, Military, Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the act of directing the affairs of a group. It is also the process of motivating a group towards accomplishment of set goals and objectives. The military is a highly formal organization, and like every formal organization there are set standards and values, as well as defined roles for members. The extent to which an organization performs or achieves her set goals is most times believed to be a measure of leadership effectiveness. This implies that for most people, effectiveness of the military of any country must be dependent on how effective the leadership is, which simply means the extent to which leadership roles are played. The study of leadership is therefore very germane, especially in the military, which is saddled with the onerous responsibility of defending the Nation from internal and external aggression (Brown, 2010). In the light of the forgoing the present paper explores the psychological characteristics that may best suit a military leader.

Leadership has been described as a process of social influence in which one person can enlist the aid and support of others in the accomplishment of a common task (Chemers, 1997). For example, some people may understand a leader simply as somebody who guides or directs others, while others define leadership as organizing a group of people to achieve a common goal. Studies of leadership have produced theories involving traits, situational interaction, function behaviour, power, vision, values, charisma and intelligence, among others.

Different situation call for different leadership styles, In an emergency when there is little time to converge on agreement and where a designated authority has significantly more experience or expertise than the rest of the team, an autocratic leadership style may be most effective; however, in a highly motivated and aligned team with a homogeneous level of expertise, a more transformational or transactional leadership style may be more effective. The style adopted should be the one that most effectively achieves the objectives of the group while balancing the interest of its individual members. (Lewin, Lippitt & White, 1999). In some organization, group, instead of individual leadership is adopted. In this situation, more than one person provides direction to the group as a whole. Some organization has taken this approach in hopes of increasing creativity, reducing cost, or downsizing. Others may see

the traditional leadership of a boss as costing too much in team performance. In some situations, the team members' best to handle any given phase of the project become the temporary leaders. Additionally, as each team member has the opportunity to experience the elevated level of empowerment, it energizes the subordinates and feeds the eye le of success. (Ingrid, 2006). Leaders who demonstrate persistence, tenacity, determination, and synergistic communication skills will bring out the same qualities in their groups. Good leaders use their own inner mentors to energize their team or organization and lead a team to achieve a success.

Eze (1978) stated that, "in the minds of Nigerian leaders, effectiveness as a leader is achieved by maintaining the master-servant, rider-horse relationships which they inherited from former colonial rulers'. He further outlined the major effects of the weakness of leadership in Nigeria, namely: a redundant characteristic development in both public and private organizations; workforce frequent mismatching; high rate of management labour- conflict; and low motivational tendencies mostly in form of laziness, incompetence, deceitfulness, general low productivity and widespread of inefficiency within the organization.

A person may be in a leadership position without providing leadership, leaving the group to fend for itself. Subordinates are given free hand in deciding their own policies and methods. This may motivate subordinates to be creative and innovative in some organizations such as the military. In the past, some researchers have argued that the actual influence of leaders in organizational outcomes is overrated and romanticized as a result of biased attribution about leaders (Meindt & Ehrlich, 1987). Despite these assertions, however, it is largely recognized and accepted by practitioners and researchers that leadership is important, and research supports the notion that leaders do contribute to key organizational outcomes (Day & Lord, 1988; Kaiser, Hogan, & Craig, 2008). According to Kavancrugh and Nnemeier (2001), certain factors determine the style of a leader and they include: leadership characteristic, subordinate characteristic, and the organization. But this paper concentrates on the theories of leadership asserted by Adnara and Mubarak (2010), which are the transactional and transformational leadership style, and these are the current areas of interest in leadership research.

Theories of Leadership

Transactional leadership style: Transaction literally means "exchange", therefore, transactional leadership deals with the exchange between the followers and the leaders desired outcome by fulfilling the leaders interest and followers expectation so as to ensure the effectiveness of an organization. Transactional leadership encourages followers to perform according to the leader's expectation and get rewarded and promotion, so as to ensure the effectiveness of the organization. Rules, procedure and standards are essential in transformational leadership and subordinate are not encouraged to be creative or to [rod a new solution to problem. Transactional leadership style succeeds only in organization where the system is simple and clearly defined.

On the other hand, transformational leadership style focuses on raising both the leaders and followers on higher level of motivation and morality. Transformational leaders continuously invest in the development of themselves and others. Buss and Riggio (2006) defined transformational leaders as those who stimulate and inspire followers to both achieve extraordinary outcomes and in the process develop their own capacity. They inspire and motivate their subordinate to achieve their set goals.

From the description above, it is deductible that the military may not be best run by strict transformational or transactional leadership. For instance, the rules of engagement in the military are straight forward and clearly defined. Military officers are not expected to exceed the rules of engagement, so transactional style seems the viable option. However, with highly qualified personnel in non-familiar terrains or unprecedented situations, a transformational taint may suffice.

Personality of Military Leaders

Research evidence supports many aspects of Eysenck's theory. However, in recent years, a consensus has emerged that five factors, which overlap imperfectly with Eysenck's three dimension, best characterize personality structure (Wiggins & Pincuss, 1992). Although these five factors are not accepted by all personality researchers (Block, 1995; Eysenck, 1992; Pervin, 1994). They now serve as touchstone for most discussion of trait structures. The five dimensions, basically the result of attempts to further reduce Cattell's 16 factors to just to just five universal dimension (Digman, 1990; Golberg, 1993) are very broad, because each brings into one large category, many traits that have unique connotations but a common theme. These five dimensions of personality are now called the five factor model, or, more informally, the Big five (McCrae & Costa, 1999). The Big five are called; Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and openness to experience.

The big five- factor model of personality traits may be serve as baseline to show how personality traits may relate to military leadership. For instance factor 1, extroversion, rates how introverted or extroverted each military leader is, but analyzing further, a military leader should be introverted in matter related to the military secrets, for instance, military personnel working in the intelligence units of all the armed forces in Nigeria should not be careless with military secrete signals during combat. Such a careless mistake may sell out information to the enemies and it is capable of making a military unit to sustain a huge casualty among their men in the war front. But a little bit of this characteristic may be required for espionage, and to enlist subordinates' trust.

Factor two; Agreeableness, refers to how friendly, nurturing, and caring a military leader is, as opposed to cold, indifferent, self-centred, or spiteful. A military leader who agrees with his subordinates may definitely have a successful military career. Even though it is said that might is right in the military, but most military leaders' succeed in their military occupation by sometimes listening to their subordinates, agree and reach a compromise on the tactics to be adopted in the military operations. Again, this is not absolute.

In factor three, a military leader who is conscientious is self-disciplined, responsible, and achieving. But military leaders who are not conscientious in their military duties may find it difficult to excel in military duties. Military leader and men of the armed forces should exhibit a high sense of discipline in the discharge of their duties. No matter the compulsion, they should not mix military duties with pleasure and they put up a high measure of gallantry in the military operations. Military leader low on this factor is irresponsible, careless and undependable.

The fourth factor, neuroticism, refers to the presence of negative upsetting emotions. Military leaders who are high in neuroticism tend to be anxious, emotionally "sour," and irritable. Military leaders who are neurotic may lack the leadership charisma, and he may not be able to command respect among his subordinates. A neurotic military leader may lack the will to command troop of soldiers in a combat. Most casualties recorded in the history of combat could be traced to the fact that most military leaders became neurotic in the line of fire (XhinWhou, 2014). Finally, Military leader who rate high on factor five, openness to experience, are intelligent, open to new ideas, and they are committed in cultural and group pursuits (Digman, 1990). The beauty of this model is that almost any traits you might name will be related to one of the five factors.

Military Leadership

Military leadership is the process of influencing soldiers and other men of the armed forces to accomplish to accomplish their mission by providing purpose, direction, and motivation among the

officers and rank and file. For example in the Nigerian army, the overall professional commanders are the Chief of Defence Staff (CDS) Chief of Army Staff (COAS), Chief of Air Staff and the Chief of Naval Staff. Among the Army; the General Officers commanding (GO C) of the various military Divisions and Brigade are bound statutorily by the military laws and regulations to take order from the Chief of Army staff. Then the commanding officers (CO's) of the various military units take orders from the brigade commanders in charge of their units. Command is the authority a person in the military service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of his rank, assignment or position.

Characteristic of a good military leader: From the theories above and the role expectations of military leadership, the following characteristics emerge;

- Command is the authority a person in the military service lawfully exercises over subordinates by virtue of his rank and assignment and position.
- The basic responsibilities of a leader are: Accomplishment of the mission and the welfare of the soldiers.
- The most fundamental organizational techniques used by military leaders are the chain of commands. The chain of command is the sequence of commanders in the military who have direct authority and primary responsibility for accomplishing the assigned unit mission while caring for personnel and property in their charge.
- A good leader must have a thorough knowledge of command essentials. The command essentials are command policies, authority, responsibility, chain of command and other channels, military rank, military discipline and conduct, and enlisted aspect of command.
- A good military leader can influence the belief and values of his soldiers by setting the example; by rewarding behaviour that supports professional beliefs, values, and norms, and by planning and conducting tough individual and collective training. In order to influence the beliefs and values of your soldiers, you must respect your soldiers and have their respect.
- A good military leader must inspire in himself and his men the confidence to overcome combat fears in the military maneuvers.

Discussion and conclusion

Military is known as a regimented organization globally. The organization is bound statutorily by the constitution to protect the nation from internal and external aggressors (Soeze, 2013). For the military to achieve their aims and objectives, they require absolute loyalty from the officers and men of the armed forces. In the military obedience to authority is very necessary and reasonable, however it can also be destructive. A superior officer in order of military hierarchy can delegate duties to his subordinate, and they are bound by the laid down rules to comply and carry out the orders. In the military we have officers and the rank and file, and any military personnel that have rank above his or her subordinates can exercise authority over them, and such authority must not be in conflict with the military laws. In the army for instance, we have two important orders namely the standing order and obeying the last command. The standing order is the order that is already in existence in the military. It is compulsory that the general officer commanding (GOC) or the commanding officer (CO), officers and men of any military formation to obey and carry out a standing order to the later except if the order is repealed from the superior military hierarchy. Among the naval officers, if you are given a contradictory order you must report the fact that the order you have just been given contradicts the previous orders given. If the officer insists you carry out the order, even though it contradicts one previously given, you must carry out the order alternatively to avoid flaunting orders from superior military hierarchies. The conflicting orders are covered under Article 1024 of the Navy Regulations.

One misapprehension soldiers may be working under is that most orders are verbal. On the contrary, many, if not most orders are written down. In general, when soldiers have conflicting guidance, the best

thing to do is to check with their superior officer to get clarification. In general the higher ranking officer tells the lower officers and rank and files on what to do. The lower ranking military personnel after receiving order gives specific direction on how to implement orders in the military formation or in a combat. In the uniform code of military justice (UCM) each service member has the duty to disobey and report unlawful orders given.

In the military a superior officer may give additional task to a junior officer, but that won't try to stop a junior officer from doing something else he has been ordered to do from someone higher than him. The appropriate thing to do in the case of conflicting order is to report to the military authority about the contradictory orders for further briefing and direction. A soldier should follow the last order given and he should have some responsibility of following that order. In the military soldiers always take the most recent orders. In the military laws and regulation, orders from a superior officer should override the last command given by immediate but lower superior military personnel. But if the order is in conflict with the superior order such a lower order will be null and void. Above all if there is a plot by the military personnel to flaw orders, refusing to go on combat or refusal to quell insurgence, (for instance the war against the Boko-Haram), such action may tantamount to mutiny in the army. In tandem with the military laws, mutinies in the military are usually punishable by death, except that the court-martialing of the erring military personnel proved otherwise. On the five factor model (The Big Five) of Introversion- Extroversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism and Openness to experience. Among these personality traits the military leaders who possess the traits of openness to experience are very intelligent, open to new ideas and they are committed in the group affairs. Military leaders with openness to experience are in better position to accept and evaluate new ideas from his subordinates for the benefits of the overall command. Therefore, although this model is not exhaustive, the personality trait a military leader possesses definitely has positive or negative effects on his command. The Nigerian military should employ the services of clinical and military psychologists in their various military formations, and they will be mandated professionally to periodically evaluate and assess military personnel to enhance competence.

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