

## THE PHENOMENON OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN SOLDIERS OF POLISH MILITARY CONTINGENTS

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**Abstract:** Contemporary polish military organizations need commanders who, like efficient managers, will be able to effectively manage their subordinates on the battlefield in such a way that they will achieve goals without the necessity of incurring personal losses. The purpose of the article is to present leadership attitudes and the analysis of the characteristics of military leaders desirable while performing combat tasks on foreign missions on the example of a selected case study.

**Keywords:** leadership, personality traits of the leader, social attitude, foreign missions.

## ZJAWISKO PRZYWÓDZTWA WŚRÓD ŻOŁNIERZY POLSKICH KONTYNGENTÓW WOJSKOWYCH

**Streszczenie:** Współczesne polskie organizacje wojskowe potrzebują dowódców, którzy jak sprawni menedżerowie, będą w stanie efektywnie kierować swoimi podwładnymi na polu walki w taki sposób, by osiągać założone cele bez konieczności ponoszenia strat osobowych. Celem niniejszego artykułu jest zaprezentowanie postaw przywódczych oraz analiza cech przywódców wojskowych pożądanych podczas wykonywania zadań bojowych na misjach zagranicznych na przykładzie wybranego studium przypadków.

**Słowa kluczowe:** przywództwo, cechy osobowościowe przywódcy, postawa społeczna, misje zagraniczne.

*If there is any one secret of success, it lies  
in the ability to get the other person's point  
of view and see things from that person's  
angle as well as from your own.*

Henry Ford

## 1. Introduction

Leadership is evident in many areas of human activity in a political, psychological, religious or organizational context. Its significance is particularly visible and important in the military environment, which, drawing from the tradition of the commander-in-chief who fights for battle and builds the fighting spirit, even now, with ever more technologically sophisticated combat systems, does not lose its significance (Malinowski. 2013, p. 280). Leadership is an influence on the behaviour of others. It is a kind of social influence that occurs when one person is capable of causing the desired behaviour by another person. This is because of the bond that connects them, or because of the social relationship that exists between them. Leadership is the art of mobilizing people to effectively implement activities. The essence of leadership is to exert a special influence within the group in order to bring it closer to the goal of permanently satisfying its essential needs (Chrobot, 2017, p. 120). The purpose of this article is to present the phenomenon of leadership in public military organizations on the example of commanders who participated in combat missions on foreign missions, which affects their further functioning in the modern army. The research material presented in the article is presented as a case study, so that the knowledge obtained through analysis could be used to better understand phenomena similar to the phenomena analyzed and based on this to improve real activities, and to conduct a broader research on this topic (Wereda, 2005, p. 22).

## 2. Leadership – the essence and meaning in contemporary military organizations

The term "leadership" is readily invoked to explain the difficult-to-understand effectiveness of a society, group or individual. Therefore, the sources of effective functioning are looked for in the guilds of other units (theory of traits), their behaviour (behavioural theories), the situation in which the team and their leader found themselves (situational theories), an undefined charisma (visionary, charismatic, and transformational leadership) or other factors that give rise to new leadership, e.g. emotional leadership theory, fifth degree, integration leadership, attribution leadership (Czuba, Miszczak, 2017, p. 121).

The importance of leadership as a determinant of the effectiveness of the command is noticed, among others, by John P. Kotter, claiming that "in the war, competent leaders are indispensable at every level. Nobody has been brilliant enough to come up with a way to effectively manage soldiers on the battlefield, it is there that you have to lead them " (Kotter. 2012, p. 39). The word leader itself derives from English – leading, leadership. In summary, it can be assumed that the leader knows the path he follows walks it and shows it following him. You can also call it a guide, visionary, motivator or mentor. Such a person can be easily

found among a group of people, it is enough to observe whose opinion is the most valuable during the next elaboration of the decision, to which more attention is paid during the discussion, who quickly gains the consent and support of the general or who the group follows. The leader cannot be born, but one can accept the thesis that leadership can be learned. Specialist in issues related to the psychology of success, Brian Tracy shows the successive stages of the path of a person with managerial predispositions to become a leader. Among them are (Tracy, 2015):

- winning people's trust and enjoying their loyalty,
- raising the sense of purpose in the organization,
- strategic thinking and having a general picture of the situation,
- transforming difficulties into opportunities to be used,
- taking the right risk,
- clear speaking about goals and strategies and gaining support for them,
- creating winning teams,
- helping ordinary people achieve extraordinary results,
- nurturing valuable relationships and using the law of reciprocity,
- becoming a natural candidate for a leader who will lead the organization to win.

A leader is a special type of manager, commander, who directly affects the behaviour of members of the team, his/her subordinates. Having a big influence on them causes them to execute commands desired by the boss. This is due to the special type of ties that connect them. Subordinates are willing to trust their leader and subordinate to him/her voluntarily. It can also be said that such a person enjoys authority, and his/her authority is acceptable to most groups, which is not often found in the modern world. A characteristic feature of the leader is that people want to imitate him/her and easily submit to his/her leadership, expect from their leaders help in accomplishing a common task, working out the principles of cooperation in the team and reactions to individual members of the group and meeting their needs. According to Balzer, a leader is a person who has personal authority, is influential and therefore has specific social functions. Among the desired features Balzer enumerates:

- vision,
- involvement,
- confidence,
- strenght,
- speed in action,
- honesty,
- warmth;
- authenticity,
- hardness, but justice,
- organizational skills.

One cannot think about leadership without giving a personal example. The leader should set an example and not set him/her an example. The best received example is the unconscious, resulting from who he/she really is, in contrast to the behaviour aimed at triggering a meticulously calculated effect of the so-called "being on show". If the example becomes a habit, the leader will not think about it, it will be natural. An undesirable effect, however, is to praise yourself that you are such a good leader. As the author further notes, if the leader is to lead others effectively to the same extent through personal example and other means, he/she must possess one more feature: modesty and even humility. This is the least common feature of leadership that only the best ones stand out (Balzer, 2012).

If someone appears in the group as a leader, it is the result of him/her having certain desirable traits. In the publication D.M. Stewart presents features considered to be the most valuable at the highest management level in the order of their importance, and there leadership came in second place, just behind the ability to make decisions. Then, such features as: integrity, enthusiasm, imagination, willingness to work hard, analytical skills, understanding for others, ability to see opportunities, ability to cope with unpleasant situations, ability to adapt quickly to changes, willingness to take risks, ability to express thoughts clearly, entrepreneurship, mental acuity, the ability to efficiently administer, open mind, perseverance or ability to work for many hours. These distinctions were established on the basis of a survey carried out among effectively running CEOs, successful businesses, which shows how important the group leadership is (Stewart, 1996, p. 26). According to Daniel Goleman, an outstanding leader should be characterized by the following features:

- emotional self-awareness,
- emotional self-control,
- focus on achieving goals,
- positive worldview (optimism),
- adaptability,
- empathy,
- organizational awareness,
- the role of teacher and mentor,
- conflict management,
- charisma,
- teamwork (Sakowska, 2013).

On the other hand, specialist in the field of behavioural psychology, S. Weinschenk, in her book described in a very interesting way motivational stimuli, thanks to which it is possible to achieve the intended goal (Weinschenk, 2014, p. 13):

- need for bonds,
- habits
- suggestiveness of the story about yourself,

- stick and carrot,
- instincts,
- the desire for maturity,
- cognitive illusions.

With the phenomenon of leadership, we can deal with the smallest team or sections, through tactical relationships like brigade or division and at the operational or strategic level. At the head of each of the above-mentioned organizational units is the commander appointed by decision or command. The team cooperates to achieve the goals set by this commander. Such a person should be aware of the fact that a good and effective team is not created overnight and should be worked on. He/she should also know that there are group processes in each group; there are various types of activity of individual members, social roles function and shape, working methods, norms and rules concerning its members are developed. There are specific interactions between its members, i.e. cooperation, rivalry and even conflicts.

Therefore, a research question should be posed: what, then, the commanding and admiration skills, understood as the ability to manage human teams, should have a commander at the head of such an organization, in particular during performing combat missions on foreign missions? According to many researchers, "command is an art that is the domain and artistry of the commander ..." (Jarecki, Cołoducha, 2000, p. 24). The source of submission to the will of the commander is his/her personal authority, expressed in recognition of the superior as a formal leader. The prestige of a person based on recognized values valued in a given environment is an authority here. There is no doubt that such a person should constantly work on improving their leadership skills. There are various methods by which the army should shape and strengthen commanding skills, i.e.:

- self-education,
- participation in trainings and exercises,
- participation in courses and trainings,
- ability to listen to subordinates and superiors,
- the ability to draw conclusions not only from failures, but also from successes.

Extremely valuable during foreign missions seem to be such social competencies of the commander as:

- knowledge,
- skills (including the ability to function among others or cooperation with others),
- experience,
- attitude,
- exerting influence on others,
- the ability to persuade,
- motivating,
- the ability to communicate effectively,

- ability to resolve conflicts,
- ability to control emotions,
- high resistance to stress.

The competences possessed by the commander in the management and management of the entrusted group are particularly important in achieving the assumed goals in this particular battle set by his/her superiors or resulting from the need of the moment particularly important in actions on the front line. The great leaders such as Hannibal, Alexander the Great, Napoleon, George Patton, Dwight Eisenhower and George Washington were well aware of this. Each of them was taught leadership during his professional career and everyday life. Leadership has also become very important in other NATO armies, and so British troops have formulated seven leadership patterns in the Leadership Handbook that can be easily remembered by military leaders:

- **Lead by Example,**
- **Encourage Thinking,**
- **Apply Reward and Discipline,**
- **Demand High Performance,**
- **Encourage Confidence in the Team,**
- **Recognise Individual Strengths and Weaknesses,**
- **Strive for Team Goals (The British Army Manual, 2015, p. 15).**

Americans, in turn, pay attention to the values and attributes that should be gift of the leader, because they have a significant impact on the decision-making process he/she is carrying out, and in particular help in distinguishing between good and bad. They specify seven values which should be recognized in their service, i.e.: loyalty, duty, respect, disinterested service, honour, integrity and personal commitment. Attributes that he/she should constantly work on are mental, physical and emotional. In addition, he/she has the following skills: in terms of interpersonal contacts, conceptual, technical and tactical. In terms of his/her business activities one should be characterized by the ability to influence other soldiers, being operative and effective in actions (The U.S. Army Manual, 2012, p. 3).

The Bundeswehr also sees an important role of this phenomenon in its functioning, which in the guidelines for its functioning states that leadership is the basis of military service in its ranks and contributes to the image of a soldier in society. What's more, in the guidelines for the functioning of the German army, the term "leadership culture of the Bundeswehr" can be found, showing the significance of this phenomenon in Western neighbours (Bundeswehr, 2017, p. 3).

The subject of leadership in the army and its creation was also noticeable during scientific conferences around the world. One of the speakers at the conference in Romania was Alexandra Munteanu from the University of Bucharest who notes that all professional army leaders are consistently preparing to perform new and larger duties while improving the key competences of the leader. Before they become organizational and strategic leaders, they should be multi-

task leaders who can act at all levels of leadership as well as use their extensive experience and knowledge to be successful across the spectrum of tasks facing them. These people follow the ongoing transformation of the army and react to changing operational environments (Munteanu, 2016, p. 9).

The Polish Army, a model of the allied army, has recently become interested in including leadership in command. Therefore, military higher education, as part of the subject devoted to leadership or postgraduate studies in this field, is proposed to students to create and use leadership skills in the military service. However, to date, the development of a specific model of military leadership is associated with the difficulties of definition, the choice of one of many leadership models described in the literature and the specific character of the army (Czuba, Miszczak, 2017, p. 125).

Graduates of military schools realize that their service in military units and the implementation of tasks during foreign missions will require efficient command of soldiers in the conditions of the modern battlefield. The changes that took place in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland as well as in other armies of the world caused significant changes in the social role of the commander. A young adept hitting the first official post takes direct command of the platoon entrusted to him/her, a group of professional soldiers (in the number of about 30), who have much longer experience in a military unit, in foreign missions, on military training grounds. He/she was subject to professional non-commissioned officers or rank-and-file men, most often highly qualified employees in their trade who knew military crafts. The management of such a team is therefore not an easy matter, in particular the lack of sufficient experience but also the knowledge and skills of effectively exerting influence on subordinates. It is about the ability to achieve the goals set for them using the resources available to create an advantage over the opponent (Michaluk, Kacała, 2014, p. 51).

Leadership development continues to be a serious challenge for organizations around the world, as the transition to new technology packed with technology creates even bigger gaps in management. Leaders today need different skills and knowledge, sometimes completely different and less important in previous generations. Most organizations did not adjust quickly enough to promote young leaders and build new leadership models (Abbatiello et al., 2017., p. 77). One of such organizations is the army, which in recent years has become more and more modern by adapting its structures to new threats.

## **1. The phenomenon of leadership in the Polish Armed Forces – a case study**

In the Armed Forces, leadership should dominate at every level that in a decisive way contributes to achieving the set goals. It should be visible in particular during the implementation of tasks on military missions just where there is a real threat to the life and

health of soldiers. Research work related to defining the competency model of the leader in the contemporary Armed Forces may contribute to improving the effectiveness of military management, in particular when carrying out combat tasks as part of foreign missions, therefore the authors of this article examined soldiers, participants of foreign missions in Iraq, Afghanistan, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Lebanon, in order to distinguish leadership qualities that are particularly important from the point of view of subordinates.

The research was conducted on the basis of specialist tests that took into account the knowledge in the field of psychology, sociology or management so far, thanks to which it was possible to verify the predispositions of soldiers due to their traits, behaviours and skills related to leadership. Explanation of the multidimensionality of leadership in the military environment as well as the identification of the competence model of contemporary leaders seems to be an important step towards finding the right place of leadership in the theory and practice of commanding.

In addition to this article, in the area of required leadership characteristics of commanders during foreign missions, a survey was conducted. The subjects of the study were the opinions of soldiers on the desirable characteristics of leaders in crisis situations, having a significant impact on the effectiveness of tasks carried out by soldiers. Soldiers from line units of the Polish Army as well as soldiers, who, due to their military rank, currently serve in high-level commands, were qualified for the study. The study included commanders, soldiers and people referred to as the leader. The research was carried out in the form of Structured Questionnaire – giving the opportunity to give gradation of leadership traits on a sample of 20 soldiers, thanks to which it was possible to gather the desired information about the attitudes and qualities of leaders. The whole was supplemented with own observations based on the experience of one of the authors in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Afghanistan. The specification of the test sample for specific tests is presented in Table 1.

**Table 1.**

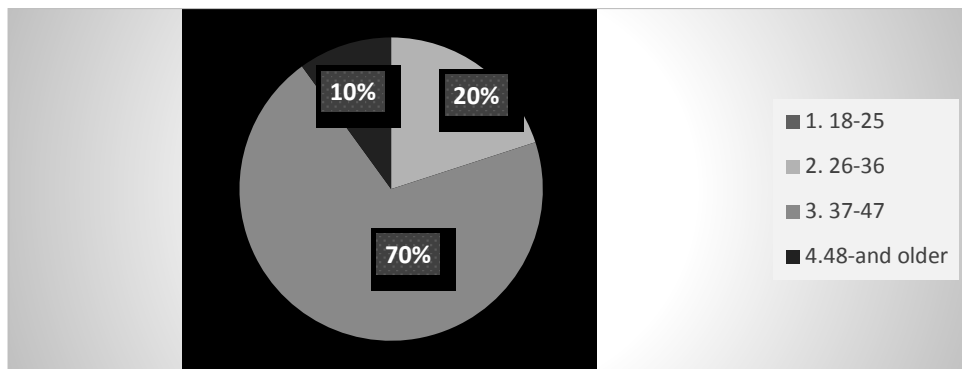
*Research sample*

Lp.	Research method	Sample	Explanation
1.	<b>Questionnaire study SCQ</b>	<b>N = 20</b> soldiers	Conducting SCQ interviews on a random sample of soldiers (who participated in foreign missions in the past, as well as people referred to as military leaders).
2.	<b>Research place</b>	<b>N ~ 1-6</b> Polish Army units	The organizational units of the Polish Army were selected; whose soldiers have combat experience.
3.	<b>Research time</b>	<b>N = 20</b> soldiers	1,5 month (since 01.08.2018 r. to 15.09.2018 r.),

Source: own study.

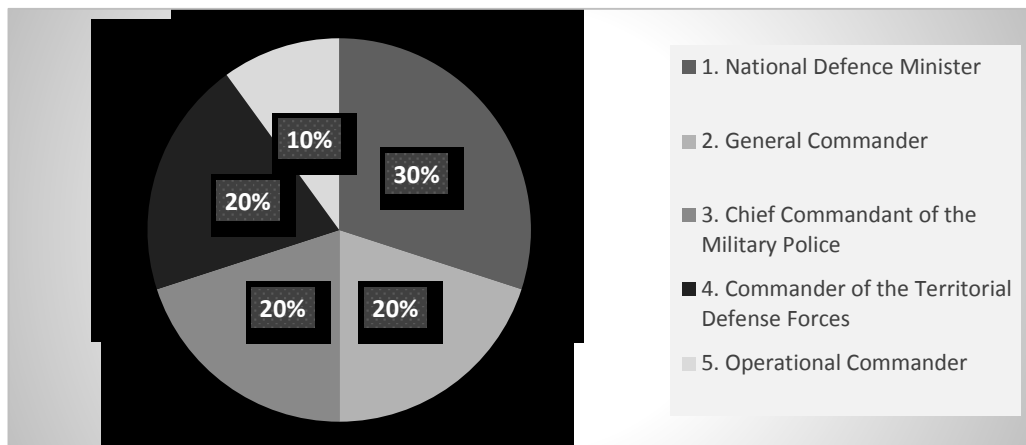
The detailed distribution of socio-demographic variables of the sample was as follows: the vast majority of the sample surveyed was men (90%) and only 10% were women. The distribution of the respondent's variable age is presented below in Figure 1.





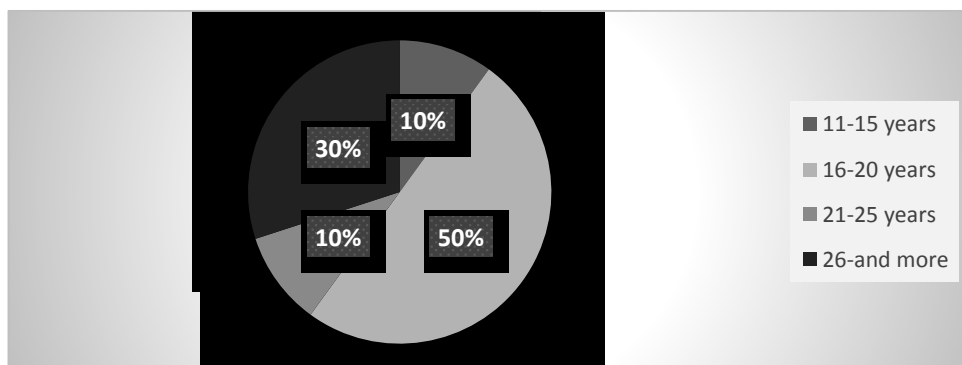
**Figure 1.** Age of the respondents. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

The largest group are soldiers in the 37-47 age range (70%). The youngest respondents constitute 20% (aged 26-36), and the oldest respondents are 10% (48 years and older). The vast majority of respondents constituting 80% are officers and 20% are non-commissioned officers. Another variable that allows the characteristics of the sample to be examined is the subordination of soldiers (Figure 2).



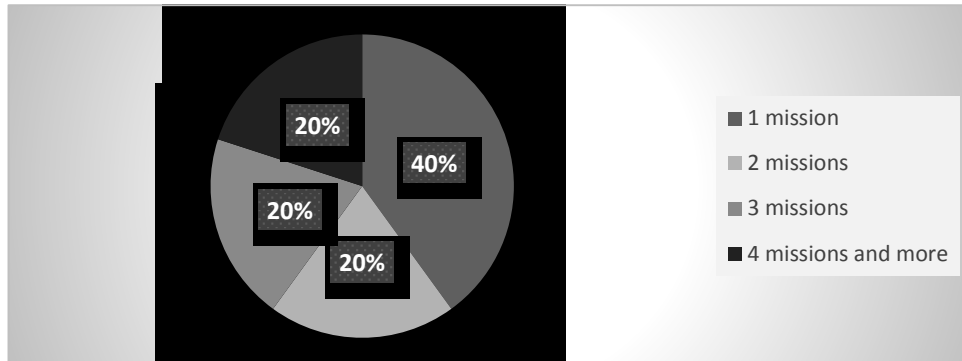
**Figure 2.** Organizational subordination of respondents. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

Most, 30% of respondents are under the Minister of National Defence, under the Commander of the Territorial Defence Forces, the General Commander, the Chief Commandant of the Military Police 20%, and under the Operational Commander 10% of the respondents. Another variable describing the test sample is the length of service in professional military service (Figure 3).



**Figure 3.** Internship in professional military service. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

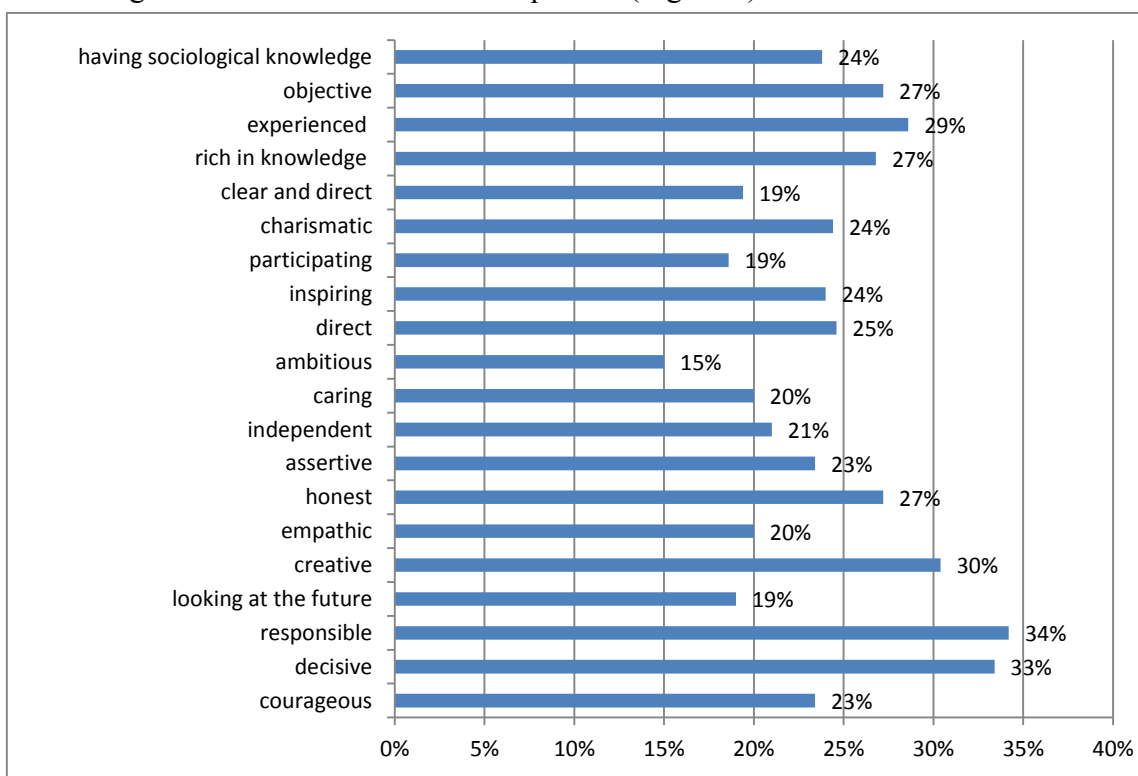
The largest group of respondents were soldiers with a service of 16-20 years and constitute 50% of respondents, then 30% were respondents who have 26 and more years of service and 10% of respondents were soldiers with a service of 11-15 years and 21-25 years. The last variable describing the survey is the number of foreign missions completed (Figure 4).



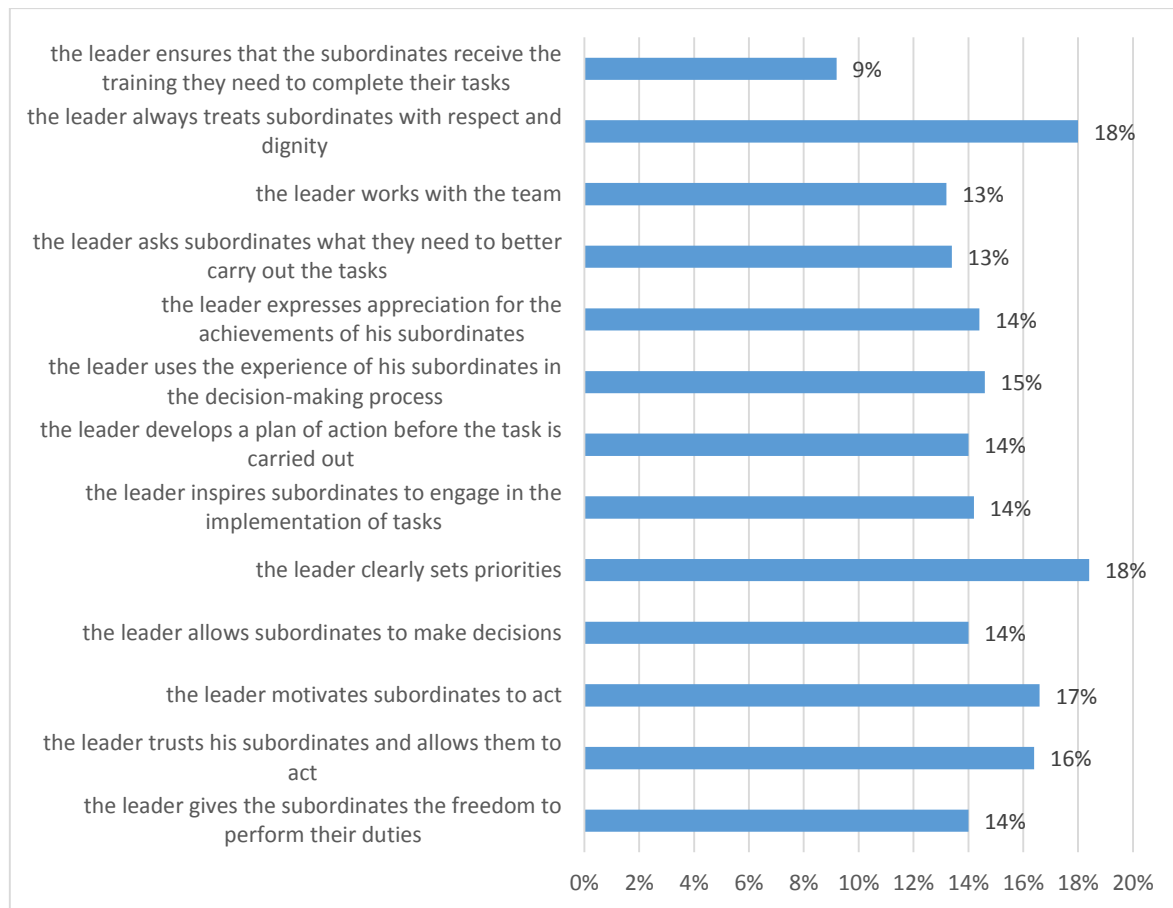
**Figure 4.** Number of foreign missions. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

The largest group of respondents are soldiers with experience gained in one foreign mission, and the remaining groups with experience in two, three and four or more foreign missions represent 20% of respondents.

The main part of the survey begins with the question: was there the formal functioning leader in your team? All respondents answered this question positively adding at the same time that this leader was given by senior superiors by an appropriate decision or a personal order. When asked about the desirable leadership features in foreign missions, respondents indicated the following characteristics as the most important (Figure 5).

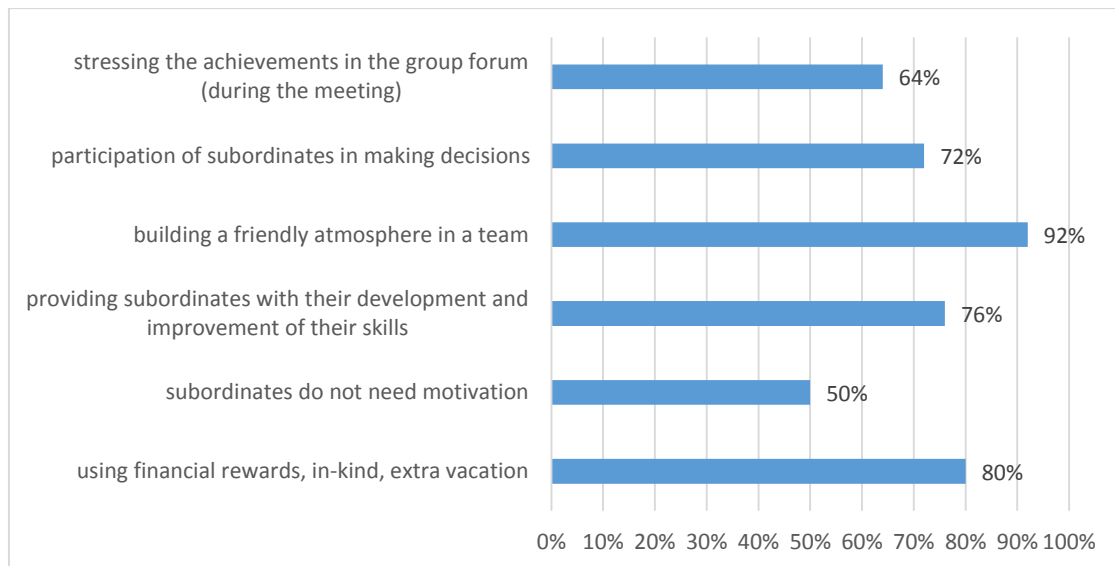


**Figure 5.** Specification of the desired leadership features on foreign missions. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).



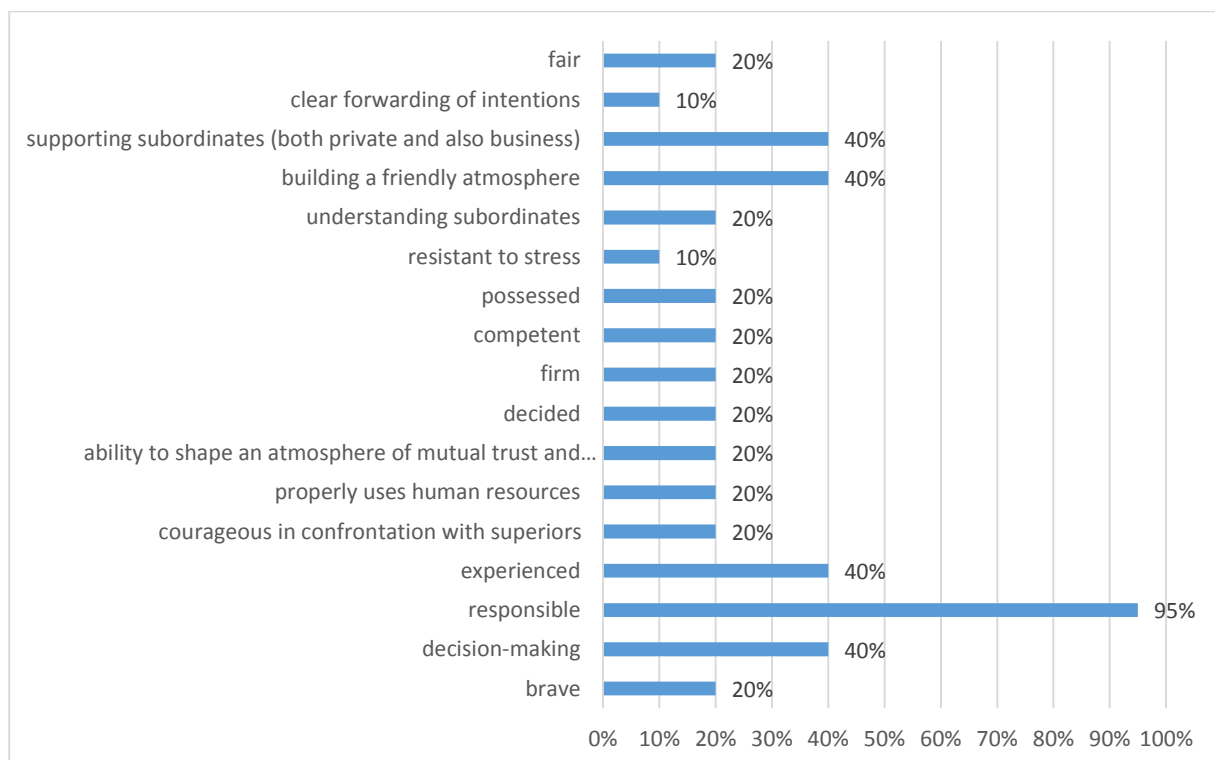
**Figure 6.** Specification of the most common behaviours among commanders during foreign missions. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

The most common behaviours in teams during foreign missions include such behaviours as: the leader clearly sets priorities; the leader motivates subordinates to act or the leader trusts subordinates and allows them to act. The rarest ones include: the leader cares for providing subordinates with the necessary training needed for their tasks, the leader cooperates with the team and the leader asks subordinates what they need to better fulfil their tasks. Another aspect of human leadership is the process and ways of motivating soldiers during foreign missions (Figure 7).



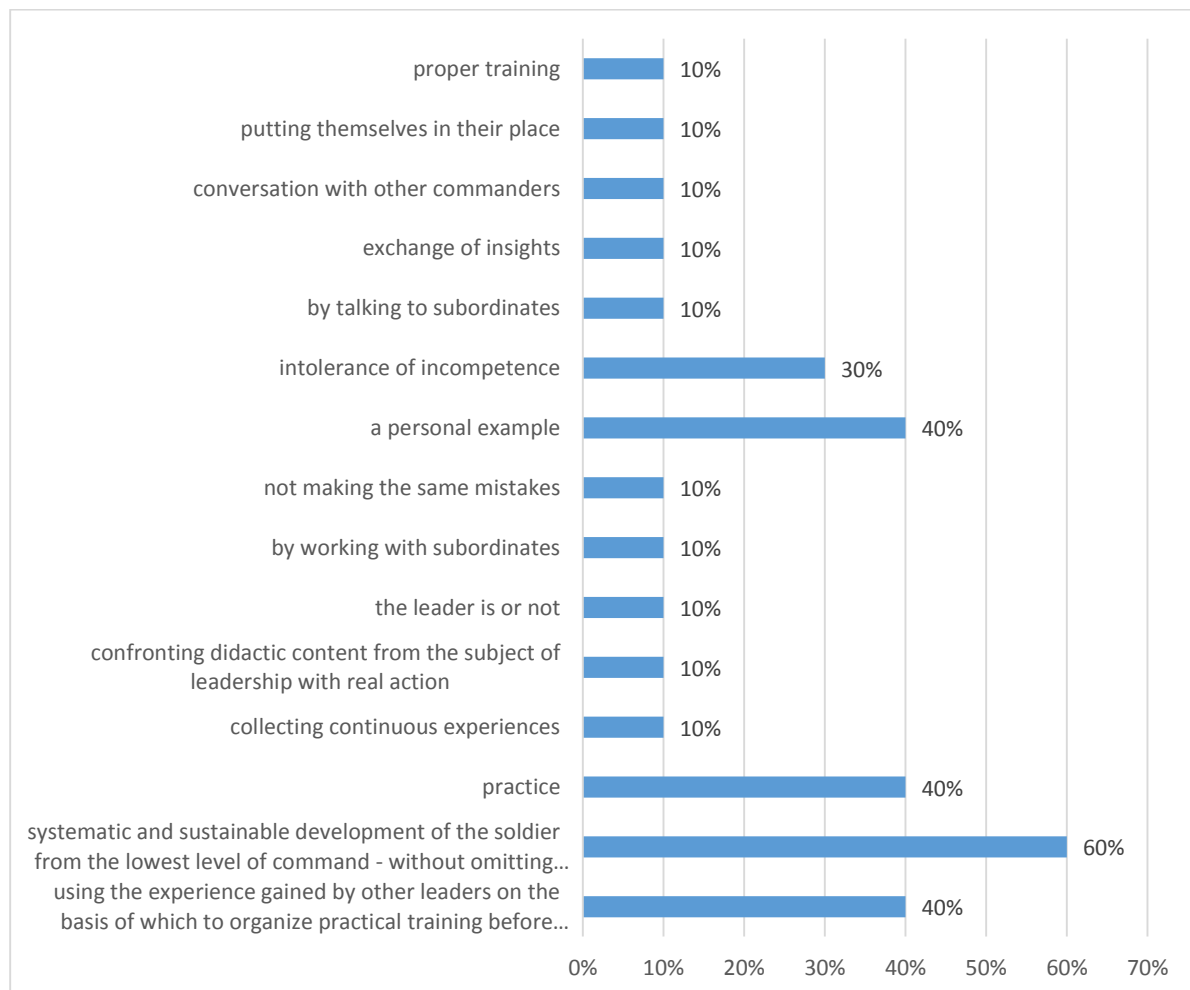
**Figure 7.** Specification of ways to motivate soldiers during foreign missions. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

Respondents indicated that the following motivational forms were most often used: building a friendly atmosphere in the team, financial and material rewards, and additional vacation. Moreover, the respondents did not assess the lowest statement that subordinates do not need motivation; on the contrary it is very important. One question, however, was open, in which the respondents themselves expressed their views on the desirable characteristics of the commanders/leaders during foreign missions, which they think are the most important. The following are shown below (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Specification of the most important leadership features during foreign missions. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

Respondents clearly indicated that the most important feature of leaders is above all responsibility, then supporting subordinates, building a positive atmosphere, experience and decision-making. Another important element was also the way of shaping desirable features and leadership skills, as shown in Figure 9.



**Figure 9.** Ways of shaping skills and leadership qualities. Source: own study, 2018 (N = 20).

According to the respondents, desirable features and leadership skills can be built in particular through systematic and sustainable development, personal example, practice and using the experience of other soldiers. In the course of a larger study, it was established that as many as 80% of respondents indicated that during preparations for the implementation of foreign missions they did not meet with the elements of leadership training, unfortunately only 20% of them were affirmative. The questionnaire ended with the question whether according to the respondents the military subordinate functions more efficiently during foreign missions, 90% of respondents said that the presence of the leader improves the effectiveness of the military subunit during the implementation of tasks on foreign missions, and 10% had a separate opinion.

## Conclusions

Managing soldiers especially during foreign missions poses particular challenges before the commanders and their leadership qualities certainly contribute to the attainment of the set goals. The soldiers themselves, participants of foreign missions, expect their superiors to provide conditions for functioning in a relatively safe environment. Deepening knowledge in the studied area may approximate the desired competence model of military commanders.

Own research, carried out in 2018 with the participation of soldiers, took the form of pilot studies and aimed to identify leadership features, behaviours, types of motivating soldiers serving in Polish military contingents, as well as attempts to create a competence model of the leader desired during this type of combat tasks. In addition, conducted surveys will serve as a kind of indication of the direction for further work in the area of leadership occurring during foreign missions.

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