PSYCHOLOGY OF MILITARY LEADERSHIP: PROMOTING TRUST AND EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP IN THE MILITARY

by

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Abstract
The military is a group of individuals who are usually trained and equipped to perform national security tasks in unique and often chaotic and trauma filed situation. In the armed forces, officers usually encounter different kinds of situations, there is need to have a deeper knowledge of men and appropriate ways of directing themto surmount these situations. Successful leadership requires special skills and traits, but more importantly, a basic knowledge of psychology becausethis will aid in understanding what motivates people's actions and perceptions and thus be in a better position to adjust their management style. This paper examines the psychology of military leadership with special emphasis on the psychological principles that officers can use in efficiently directing their men to achieve greater proficiency and success in battle.

Keywords: Psychology, Military, Trust, Effective Leadership

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is conceptualized by Vroom and Jago (2007),as a process of motivating people to work together collaboratively to accomplish great things. Historically, leaders are said to be born, not made(Bono,Ilies& Gerhardt,2000). People who adhere to this view believe that there is something about a personthat determines whether he or she will be an extraordinary leader (Judge, Bono, Ilies&Gerhardt, 2000). In years past also, effective leadership is linked to charisma, intelligence and other personality traits; however, recent scholars believe that for leaders to be effective, they must work to understand the values and opinions of their followers about what the group embodies and stand for and thus how it should act. According to Haslam, Reicher and Platow (2011) effective leadership is grounded in the capacity of the leader to embody and promote a social identity that they share with others. These authors argued that leadership is the product of individual's 'We-ness' rather than of individual's 'I- ness'. Thus a good leader does not think in isolation, but believe in group process whereby leaders and followers are joined together. For this to succeed leaders need to represent and champion the group. They also need to create and embed a sense of shared identity. Ross and Staw (1993) asserted that effectiveness in leaders lies in their ability to figure out how to maintain a level of decisiveness even when the social cues do not point clearly to an appropriate

response.Psychological research has shown that those who perceive their own status accurately are more likely to be influenced (Anderson, Srivastava, Beer, Spataro& Chatman, 2006). Also, leaders can incite members' to agree with and care intensely about organizational objectives by increasing member's openness to organizational influence which may include both unfreezing members' prior beliefs and influencing subsequent beliefs and behaviours through shared expectations of others (O'Reilly &Chatman, 1996). In essence, leadership is more about the ability to shape what followers actually want to do, not the act of enforcing compliance using rewards and punishment.

Going by the social identity theory of leadership, a key function of leadership is to forge, transform and consolidate one's identity as a member of a group. This implies that if membership in a group is important to a person's sense of self, the person is more likely to be influenced by a leader who matches his or her understanding of what the group stands for, than by one who does not (Hoggs, 2007).

Military Leadership concept is not a new approach. It is widely used (Eicher&Eicher, 2001; Taylor,1977), and it considersthe interactions of a military leader and his subordinates in an organization. Responsibility and chain of command are usually, very important dimensions in military leadership. Military leadership

aims to support the productivity and effectiveness of a leader by providing security service. It encourages sympathy toward colleagues needs, considering the world issues from different perceptions, and critical thinking(Taylor, 1977).

Military psychology deals with the use of appropriate psychological methods in camp life in teaching military theory and practice, in combat situations. The officer, by definition, a human engineer is also a psychologist to the degree that he makes use of facts and rules of action available for sound and adequate handling of the men in his command. Military psychology is thus one of the many branches that are designated as human engineering.

The use of psychological techniques in handling men in wartime is as old as war itself but the application of accurately determined rules of human engineering for military situations is relatively recent. There are many approaches to the study of human engineering in military science, but of interest to this paper are the psychological principles that any officer can use in efficiently directing the activities of his men in order to attain ultimate success in battle and thus speeding the military man on his way toward greater proficiency inhis handling of the men assigned to him (Eicher & Eicher, 2001).

Modern military jobs according to Janowitz (1960) are usually non combat jobs. In some instance, they require knowledge from the very frontiers of science. Even in peacetime, however, the atmosphere is often one of crises, danger and stress. Operations are often conducted in environments that are exotic both physically and culturally, and involve complex, expensive, technically advanced, rapidly obsolescing equipment (Janowitz, 1960). On daily basis, every officer in the armed forces encounters numerous situations in which a more thorough knowledge of men and how to direct them would be of inestimable value. This is particularly true in the case of young officers in training and those who have recently graduated from officer training schools. The major task of the line officer when all has been said and done is that of controlling men.

Psychology as a matter of fact deals with the understanding, prediction and control of man's behaviour, and since the major task of a line officer is that of controlling men, his is the job of human engineering, since he directs his men and is in turn, directed by his superior officers. To serve efficiently in his capacity, the officer must readily acquire those tricks of the trade that make for effective functioning of his entire command. It is important for example to teach the men during their initial training periods that time, energy, morale is conserved. This is a practical problem in human engineering and it is closely related to the understanding and control of human

behaviour, namely to psychology in general terms (Hoggs, 2007).

Forsyth (2010), distinguished between task and relationship model of leadership which maintains that most leadership behaviours can be classified as performance maintenance or relationship maintenance. Task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership are two models that are often compared, as they are known to produce varying outcomes under different circumstances.

Task-oriented (or task-focused) leadership is a behavioural approach in which the leader focuses on the tasks that need to be performed in order to meet certain goals, or to achieve a certain performance standard. These leaders focus on getting the necessary task, or series of tasks, at hand in order to achieve a goal. These leaders are typically less concerned with the idea of catering for employees, and more concerned with finding the step-by-step solution required in meeting specific goals. Such leaders often actively define the work and the roles required, put structures in place, and plan, organize, and monitor progress within the team (Griffin &Ebert, 2010; Manktelow, 2012).

Relationship-oriented (or relationship-focused) leadership on the other hand is a behavioural approach in which the leader focuses on the satisfaction, motivation and the general well-being of the team members

.They are focused on supporting, motivating and developing the people on their teams and the relationships within. This style of leadership encourages good teamwork and collaboration, through fostering positive relationships and good communication. Relationship-oriented leaders prioritize the welfare of everyone in the group, and will place time and effort in meeting the individual needs of everyone involved. This may involve offering incentives like bonuses, providing mediation to deal with workplace or classroom conflicts, having more casual interactions with team members to learn about their strengths and weaknesses, creating a non-competitive and transparent work environment, or just leading in a personable or encouraging manner(Griffin & Ebert, 2010; Manktelow, 2012).

Officer as a Teacher

Every officer is a teacher. One of the skills of a teacher is their ability to instruct and the ability to instruct has a place among the skills of the officer. Making errors is a normal procedure in learning since men learn from their errors. To repeat the same error is quite unnecessary and inefficient. Most officers can and should improve their instructional methods if they watch for common errors that reduce in degree the effectiveness of their instruction.

Fundamental principles of instructions include the Principle of Decentralization which states that every officer must first

have learned military theory and tactics before teaching them to the subordinate officer. Thus he tells them what to do and when the task is completed (Schmitt, 1997). Decentralization is not merely one choice of command and control, but a basic nature of war. Centralized command and control represents an effort to muscle the system into some unnatural position. In decentralized command, young officers are rarely told how to carry out orders. The principle of decentralization makes every officer a learner and every officer a teacher. In this way, every officer is prepared by experience for leadership in the armed forces.

Whether orders are given by officers orally or in writing, the officer is responsible for the successful completion. When given orders, the subordinate officer should repeat the orders as he understands it. It is better to use slightly different words from those originally used to make sure that the orders are well understood. Second the officer should ask questions until the details of the duty are comprehended. Questions should however be limited to those absolutely necessary to a clear understanding of the mission and should refer to the ways in which the duty is to be accomplished. Third, the officer should avail himself of a convenient pocket sized notebook in which to write down orders and other facts. In line with this principle, each young officer must expect to be told what and when and not how because he is

expected to work out for himself, 'how'. To achieve this, he must be an efficient and rapid learner. He must likewise be an enthusiastic and clear headed teacher. To accomplish his goals, he must look upon his training orders as opportunities to learn and increase his effectiveness as a leader of his men. The principle of decentralisation therefore provides an avenue for the qualified officer with opportunities for advancement, according to their capacities and proficiencies (Schmitt, 1997).

Progressive training is another principle. In order to teach theory and skills to his men, the officer must always begin with simple facts and drills following each with progressively more and more complex ones. The instructor starts with the simple and builds step by step until the parts are linked with one another and until a complex series of ideas or skilled acts has been acquired by even the slowest learner (Morgan, Brown, Reglin, O'Conner & Ellickson, 1987).

For proper application of progressive training technique, Morgan, Brown, Reglin, O'Conner & Ellickson (1987) asserted that the officer should make inventory of the different segments of the military theory and tactics to be taught. This enables the officer to be familiar with the material and prevents him from forgetting major and minor points in his instruction. They should as well plan and schedule instruction times i.e., always determine in advance the length

of time allowed for class instruction as well as for field-drill. If the time is short, the class periods must be spaced at greater intervals. This makes possible the use of spaced practice in learning. Because time-place habits facilitate learning, they must always be a part of the training program. Again, the inventory should be broken into segments ranging from the simple to the complex. As the instructor knows what to teach his men, and how long it will take him to accomplish the task, he then proceeds to allot time for each section of the theory or drill to be learned. The most fundamental points are placed first, all others following in sequence and in conformity with the principle of progressive training(Morgan, Brown, Reglin, O'Conner & Ellickson, 1987).

Also, drills to be learned should be divided into segments, ranging from simple to complex, about four segments. After learning first part in the segment, each personnel in the outfit should proceed to learn the second part and after learning the first two parts the officer should require his men to execute the segments learned before proceeding to the next. At the end of the day the instructor must allow final drill periods. This provides for practice in combining all parts. It aids in achieving smooth efficient performance (Morgan, Brown, Reglin, O'Conner & Ellickson, 1987). Part of the Psychological principles underlying the principle of progressive training is that a people learn most rapidly when they understand the nature of the subject and why they need to learn it. Again, people learn and remember best when the new subject matter is closely tied to the already known; A person attends to one item of experience at a time and the learner should practice in the manner in which he is later to use new facts and skills(Morgan, Brown, Reglin, O'Conner & Ellickson,1987).

Military leaders according to Eicher & Eicher, (2001) can use various psychological means to arouse officer's interest. These include; arousal of attitude of intent to learn by telling them how the lesson or drill conforms to the general pattern of combat preparation; Use of praise and reward following immediately upon evidence of successful termination of a worthwhile duty; Recognition given in the form of proficiency certificates and placements in more advanced courses; Promotion to special posts; Avoiding of negative incentives like fear of failure, demerit systems and extreme punishment. Also, officers or leaders preparing men for learning should sparingly use threats and fear of the consequences of poor performance. This is because genuine interest is hardly aroused by the application of force, fear and compulsion (Eicher & Eicher, 2001).

Trust in Military Leadership
Trust is defined by Boon and Holmes (1991), as 'a state involving confident positive expectations about another's

motives with respect to oneself in situations entailing risk'.Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995), defined trust as an individual's willingness to be vulnerable to another individual (e.g. a leader, subordinate or peer). In the armed forces, tasks in life and death situations are usually performed and this makes the issue of trust in military leaders very vital. Dirks and Ferrin, (2002) asserted that trust in leaders, particularly immediate leaders, is perhaps more important than trust between peers. Dependence on and trust in military leaders can involve considerable risk to the individual, as any mistakes made by the leader may result in serious injury or death. Obeying orders is an essential aspect of the military profession and Collins and Jacobs (2002) explain that trust is critical in a military context since individuals are expected to give up their right to self-determination and follow orders. Refusal not only puts the individual soldier at risk, but also his or her team members and leaders. The hierarchical military system puts subordinates in a vulnerable position in relation to the leader. This vulnerability not only creates the opportunity to trust but also increases sensitivity to negative manifestations of the leader's behaviours (Lapidot, Kark and Shamir, 2007).Another aspect of risk in this context is that leaders who fail to build trust from their subordinates are at high risk of becoming injured or even killed by their own subordinates.

Hamby (2002) states that 'Leaders who cannot identify with their troops and who cannot develop and maintain a bond of trust and faith with their men, contribute more than anything else to mutiny'. Trust in military leadership can be viewed either as a psychological state or as a choice behaviour.

Trust as a Psychological State
As a psychological state, trust is first, conceptualized as a state of perceived vulnerability or risk derived from individuals' uncertainty concerning motives, intentions, and prospective actions of others on whom they depend; general attitude or expectancy about other people and the social system in which they exist; and a complex, multidimensional psychological state that includes affective and motivational components (Hamby 2002).

Trust as a Choice Behaviour
Another way of conceptualizing trust is as an individual's choice behaviour. It looks upon trust as a rational choice (decisions about trust are comparable with decisions about other risky choices). Central elements in this perspective are the knowledge that enables a person to trust another and the incentives of the trustee (the person who is to be trusted). Hardin (1992) suggests that trust should be conceptualized as athree-part relation involving properties of a trustor, attributes of a trustee, and a specific context or domain over which trust is

discussed.

Distrust has been defined as "confident negative expectations regarding another's conduct" (Lewicki, McAllister &Bies,1998). On one hand, trust and distrust have been suggested to be separate concepts and not two ends of the same continuum (Lapidot, Kark, & Shamir, 2007). According to this view, trust and distrust are considered separate judgements, i.e. individuals in a complex relationship can hold both trusting and distrusting intentions and expectations towards another. Also, they have different antecedents and consequents. However, other researchers are of the opinion that trust and distrust are not different constructs.

Some researchers argue that distrust is inherently bad while others suggest that some distrust can be functional and healthy (e.g. when there are valid reasons to have concerns about the trustworthiness of others). Too much trust can lead to "blindness" which may lead to the individual being exploited (Lewicki Tomlinson & Gillespie, 2006).

Qualities of a good Leader
According to Charan (2007), leaders are expected to be ambitious, which is a desire to achieve something visible and noteworthy. This propels leaders to push themselves and others. However, when leaders have blind ambitions they make flashy acquisitions that are financially unsound or set attention-getting goals or even take on more priorities than the organization can handle out of a desire to do everything. Overambitiousness, and lack of integrity, can lead undesirable behaviour and even corruption.

Another characteristic of a leader is Drive and Tenacity; some leaders have an inner motor that pushes them to get to the heart of an issue and find solutions. They drill for specific answers and don't give up until they get them. Their high energy is infectious. They consistently drive their priorities through the organization. They search tenaciously for information they're missing and keep tweaking their mental models until they arrive at a positioning that works. But drive and tenacity can cause a leader to stick to a plan that isn't working, or outdated assumptions, or an investment that is no longer promising (Charan, 2007).

Rutherford, (2005) suggested that good leaders also have self confidence. These manifests in the ability of one to be able to listen to one's own inner voice and endure the lonely moments when an important decision falls on ones shoulders. Leaders have to be able to speak their minds and act decisively knowing that they can withstand the consequences. It's not a matter of acting tough. It's having a tough inner core, or what some refer to as emotional fortitude. Underlying fears and insecurities can be just as detrimental to your know-how as can

excessive self-confidence in the form of narcissism or arrogance.

Some leaders have a need to be liked. They therefore tend to go easy on people. They have an especially hard time dismissing people who have been loyal to them. Such leaders often find their own progress slowed because they promote people for the wrong reasons, tolerate non performers, and allow the social system to corrode (Rutherford, 2005). Also, leaders who are afraid of response tend to avoid conflicts and find it hard to challenge people on their performance or point of view. They back off when they should be giving brutally honest feedback and sometimes have a third party do that work for them (Rutherford, 2005).

Again, leaders with a fear of failure are often indecisive, defensive and less likely to spot opportunities because they are risk-averse. They find it hard to select goals for fear of choosing the wrong ones and wait too long to connect the dots in the external environment or to reposition the business. Self-confidence also affects your use or abuse of power. Every leader has to use power from time to time in assigning tasks, allocating resources, selecting or promoting people, giving differentiated rewards or redirecting dialogue. An excessive fear of failure or fear of response can make a leader uncomfortable using power, and not using power appropriately actually erodes it. Failure to deal with a recalcitrant direct report, for instance, diminishes the leader's power. On the other hand, narcissistic leaders tend to abuse power, using it irrationally or against the interests of the organization (Rutherford, 2005).

Leaders are supposed to be willingly open so as to allow themselves to be influenced by other people and their ability to share their ideas openly enhances the know-how, on the other hand, being psychologically closed can cause problems. Leaders who are psychologically open seek diverse opinions, so they see and hear more and factor a wider range of information into their decisions. Their openness permeates the social system, enhancing communication. Those who are psychologically closed are secretive and afraid to test their ideas, often cloaking that fear under the guise of confidentiality. They're distant from their direct reports and have no one outside to bounce ideas off of or to provide information that counters their own beliefs. In the new environment of complexity, being psychologically closed makes it particularly difficult to reposition the business, because the leader lacks perspectives from diverse disciplines, functions and cultures (Charan, 2007).

Leaders' know-how improves with exposure to diverse situations with increasing levels of complexity, so an eagerness for new challenges is essential. Leaders who seek out new experiences and learn from them will build their know-how faster than those who don't.

Conclusion

For success to be recorded in the military or any organization, good leadership is the key. It takes years of knowledge and experience for one to become a great leader. Failing a number of times on the road to becoming a great leader is normal as long as the individual arise immediately, dusts his/her skin and move on. Also one must be willing to learn constantly from others and be ready for change in order to become a great leader. Imbibing the qualities discussed above by leaders will make way for a more thorough knowledge of men and more appropriate way of handling them, which in the long run will promote trust and effective leadership in the military.

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