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PSYCHOSOCIAL DECISION-MAKING FACTORS IN MILITARY: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract

It can be said that one of the main fundamentals of life welfare is right decision-making. There are no doubts that we would get two different outcomes after choosing right or wrong decisions in decisive moments of one's life. This takes into account any sphere of life. Speaking about military platform we see that sometimes decisions even at the tactical level can make significant impact to strategic levels and this can directly affect the life welfare of the whole country or even regions. So, right decisions in military are important not only to the welfare of soldiers, but can be also important to peaceful survival of the humanity in various places of the world, speaking in general way. The analysis of scientific literature revealed that during the military decision-making process officers usually faced large number of decision-making factors. The literature analysis revealed three most important factor groups in the military decision-making process: psychological, social and situational. The aim of this article is to compare social (rank, time of service, marital status) and psychological (self-efficacy in general; self-efficacy in TLP (troop leading procedures)) factors in military tasks. Situational factors will not be part of this study. The main situational factors were included in each military decision-making task.

The research results disclosed that higher self-efficacy in general appears when maintenance of LT statehood and sovereignty and given specific military task is mainly blocking is the main goal of the military task. Lower self-efficacy in general appears when safety of important specific objects that would damage states' specific spheres, like energy, transportation or economy, and specific military tasks are disrupting and disturbing are the main goals. Officers with higher self-efficacy in TLP more often choose successful decisions in nine different specific military tasks. Officers' higher self-efficacy in TLP is more important to successful decision-making than officers' higher self-efficacy in general.

Keyworks: *psychosocial factors, military decision-making, officers.*

Introduction

The research on psychosocial aspects of the decision-making in military is important because it can reduce damage that military actions usually cause, and right decisions can

lead to faster and more constructive exit from an active conflict. The analysis of scientific literature revealed that there were many factors that military decision makers were facing all the time. There are articles on psychological, social, data and cultural factors of the decision-making in the military. All these factors are significantly influential. The literature analysis revealed that there were three most important factor groups in the military decision-making process: psychological, social and situational factors. In this pilot study we compare social and psychological factors that can influence the decision-making in the military.

The literature analysis suggests that there are many social factors which are related to military decision-making. Brian Hildebrand (2016) created a tool for analysing social factors in military situations. This tool was created on the basis of lessons learned after military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The purpose of this tool is to help officers with analysis and includes seven specific social factors in the decision-making process (Hildebrand, 2016). We can observe that the purpose of this method/ tool is similar to Crick and Dodge theory of social information processing which emphasises number of coded stimuli (Crick & Dodge, 1994; Dodge & Schwarts, 1997). Although empirical studies of social information processing theory are more relevant to adolescents and criminals it can be assumed that a greater number of stimuli are associated with more effective solutions not only in civilian life. The research carried out in the field of military psychology shows that social factors and their analysis are related to accomplishment of more effective military tasks (Labuc, 1991). In this context, it is appropriate to include a group of social elements in the study of decision-making factors for junior officers of land forces in order to find out which social factors are most significantly influential to the decision-making.

In this study, self-efficacy was analysed as the most important psychological factor in military decision-making. Self-efficacy is important to each of us because it affects behaviour of our daily activities. Self-efficacy is perceived as person's beliefs in one's ability to choose and perform specific actions and to successfully accomplish tasks and achieve the goals (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Bandura & Wood, 1989; Solberg et al., 2005). Depending on the level of self-efficacy, a person raises the corresponding goals, behaves in a certain way and expects specific results (Bandura, 2002; Hughes et al., 2011). The aforementioned assumptions of Bandura (1986) theory can also be successfully applied to analysis of soldier's self-efficacy. Research results indicate that soldiers with a high self-efficacy level tend to continue their assigned tasks while going through strong physical and psychological stress (Gruber et al., 2009). Research from other authors suggest that a high self-efficacy level often reports fewer choices and drives decision-makers to easier and faster decisions and that directly lead them to reduction of mistakes (Bandura & Wood, 1989; Helper & Feltz, 2012).

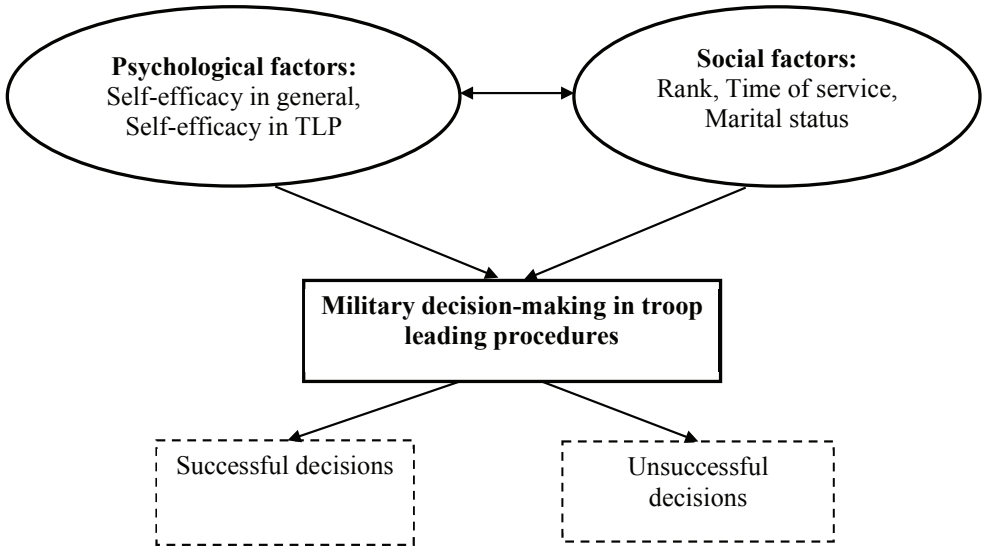

Figure 1. Psychosocial decision-making factors interface model

However, the data of the analysed research does not include self-efficacy of officers (tactical level commanders). Therefore, it remains unclear whether self-efficacy of officers is related to successful accomplishment of military tasks. After analysing military tasks and other doctrinal documents we realised that in order to reveal comparison between successful tasks of junior officers and their self-efficacy it would be expedient to investigate what officers' self-efficacy consists of. Considering the specificity of military tasks, we have found that officers' self-efficacy has two main parts: self-efficacy in general and self-efficacy in TLP (troop leading procedures). Self-efficacy in general includes officers' beliefs about their ability to perform basic military tasks. The second aspect of officers' self-efficacy involves officers' beliefs about their ability to use TLP in military decision-making.

The interface model of psychosocial decision-making factors is given in Figure 1. The pilot study analyses social and psychological factors and reveals how mean rank between social and psychological decision-making factors occurs when younger officers perform tasks in contemporary battle-operational-imitative environment. Pilot study's primary aim is to compare social (rank, time of service, marital status) and psychological (self-efficacy in general; self -efficacy in TLP) factors in military decision-making.

Research objectives:

1. To compare of psychological and social factors;
2. To reveal the comparison between psychological factors and successful decisions;
3. To disclose the comparison between social factors and successful decisions.

Research subject:

The comparison of social and psychological factors in military decision-making.

Methodology

Research participants. 89 officers from Lithuanian ground force voluntarily took part in this research. Age ranges from 22 to 40 (average age is 31, standard deviation is 4.97). The target group was chosen randomly. The main criteria meant the military rank (junior officers). Junior officers have an opportunity and are suggested to use Troop Leading Procedures (TLP) during their duty in military actions.

Ways of Evaluation

Self-efficacy in the general scale. This scale is measuring officers' beliefs about how good they are in their basics tasks. The total scale of officers' self-efficacy in general consists of 17 statements. Every statement is assessed by percent (0% to 100%). The higher percentage the higher is the level of self-efficacy in general. The scale of self-efficacy in general is based on A. Bandura's theory (1986, 2002), recommendations described in the scientific literature (Armstrong & Taylor, 2017) and military literature (Army Tactics, Techniques, & Procedures, 2011). The officers' self-efficacy scale statements are given in Table 1.

Table 1. Several statements from the officers' self-efficacy scale

Serial numbers	Statements
	Being a company commander how successfully you can perform in:
4.	Village reconnaissance tasks
5.	Building assault tasks
6.	Planned attack tasks
11.	Defence ops
15.	Withdrawal from the battle tasks
17.	Movement in contact with the enemy tasks
19.	Raiding tasks
26.	Ambush ops
36.	Fire support tasks
37.	Resource replacement tasks
41.	Communication support organisation tasks

Reliability of the scales is demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient with the value from 0 to 1. The closer to value 1, the higher internal reliability of the scale is (Vaitkevičius & Saudargienė, 2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of self-efficacy scale in general is 0.936.

Self-efficacy in the TLP scale. This scale is measuring officers' beliefs about how good they are in troops leading procedures. Total scale of officers' self-efficacy in TLP consists of 17 statements. Every statement is assessed by percent (0% to 100%). The higher percentage, the higher is the level of self-efficacy in TLP. Self-efficacy in the TLP scale is based on Bandura's theory (1986, 2002), recommendations described in the scientific literature (Armstrong, Taylor, 2017) and military (TLP and MDMP) literature (LaMarca, 2006; Army Tactics, Techniques, and Procedures, 2011; Oh, 2013). Ten statements of officers' self-efficacy in the TLP scale are given in Table 2.

Reliability of scales is demonstrated by Cronbach's alpha coefficient with the value from 0 to 1. The closer to 1, the higher internal reliability of the scale is (Vaitkevičius & Saudargienė, 2006). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of self-efficacy scale in TLP is 0.850.

Table 2. Several statements of officers' self-efficacy in TLP scale

Serial numbers	Statements
	Being a company commander how successfully you can:
1.	Prepare the 1st Warning Order
2.	Carry out the analysis of the received task
6.	Determine decisive points of the task
7.	Prepare different cause of enemy's actions in the table
10.	Draw an enemy's situation scheme
11.	Carry out risk assessment of your units upon assignment
14.	Perform military dimensional aspects
15.	Prepare the 3rd Warning Order
16.	Make initial plan of the received task
17.	Perform pre-battle check

Military operations evaluation test. This test is measuring officer's abilities to use TLP in successful/ unsuccessful military decisions. The test for evaluation of military operations consists of 10 military tasks. Each task is based on the defence doctrine (Lithuanian Military Doctrine, 2010), Lithuania State Security Department's (SSD) reports (Reports of Threats for National Security, 2018), procedures of military tasks (Vartanian & Mandel, 2011; Bank & Dhami, 2014; Nesbitt et al., 2015) and other situational factors (Conte et al., 2016). The test for evaluation of military operations is based on recommendations described in the scientific literature (Armstrong & Taylor, 2017). Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the test for evaluation of military operations in general is 0.878.

Research data calculation was done using 22 SPSS software. When analysing the research data following the *statistical analysis method* the following was used:

- Comparison of mean ranks of two independent samples: *Mann-Whitney test*.

Research process. In order to reveal psychosocial decision-making factors, three specific scales/ tests (self-efficacy in general scale, self-efficacy in TLP scale, test for evaluation of military operations) were composed during this study. These scales were created on A. Bandura's theory (1986, 2002), military defence doctrine (Lithuanian Military Doctrine, 2010) and SSD reports (Reports of Threats for National Security, 2017) with highlighted real threats. Officers had to fill questionnaires with their answers to given situations. This answering process took approximately 60–90 minutes.

Research Results

The psychosocial factors of officers' decision-making in general and at separate levels will be analysed further. The analysis of officers' comparison was conducted applying *Mann-Whitney test* because data distributions differ from normal distribution. Values of means, minimum, maximum and standard deviations are given in Table 3.

Table 3. Officers' self-efficacy values (means, minimum, maximum and standard deviations), (N=89)

Scale	Least value (minimum)	Highest value (maximum)	Mean	Standard deviation
Self-efficacy in general	49.55	98.59	83.49	8.51
Self-efficacy in TLP	72.35	100.00	91.51	6.43

The analysis of obtained data was carried out firstly calculating values of means for self-efficacy in general and self-efficacy in TLP. The obtained data shows that effectiveness of officers in military (military tasks) is evaluated fairly high: 83.49 percent in self-efficacy in general and 91.51 percent in self-efficacy in TLP.

Table 4. Distribution of research participants by age, military rank, marital status and duration of military service, (N=89)

Social factors	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Age group				
20–25	17	19.1	20.5	20.5
26–29	17	19.1	20.5	41.0
30–9	47	52.8	56.6	97.6
40 and more	2	2.2	2.4	100.0
Military rank				
second lieutenant	14	15.7	16.5	16.5
first lieutenant	37	41.6	43.5	60.0
captain	34	38.2	40.0	100.0
Period of service group				
1–5	19	21.3	22.9	22.9
6–10	24	27.0	28.9	51.8
11–15	31	34.8	37.3	89.2
16 and more	9	10.1	10.8	100.0
Marital status				
married	74	83.1	93.7	93.7
living with a partner	4	4.5	5.1	98.7
living alone	1	1.1	1.3	100.0

Social factors were also calculated during analysis of the obtained data. Frequency of officer' social factors (age, period of service, rank and marital status) are given in Table 4. Majority of officers (more than 56 percent) are from 30 to 39 years old. The second group (from 20 to 25) and the third group (from 26 to 29) comprise 20 percent each. And only 2 percent of officers were over 40 years old. Speaking about military ranks of all officers in the research, there were 43.5 percent of first lieutenants, 40 percent of captains and 16.5 percent of second lieutenants. More than 37 percent of participating officers serve in the military for more than 10 years. 28 percent serve for up to 10 years. And 23 percent have their military service records up to 5 years. From all participating officers, more than 93 percent are married.

Table 5. Comparison of officer's social factors and self-efficacy in general (N=89)

Social factor	Low self-efficacy		Higher self-efficacy		P
	Number of participants	Mean rank	Number of participants	Mean rank	p<0.05
Age group	33	29.36	50	50.34	**0.00**
Military rank	35	32.09	50	50.64	**0.00**
Period of service	33	27.79	50	51.38	**0.00**

Results in Table No. 5 show the mean ranks of social factors and self-efficacy in general differ. From the given outcomes we can make an assumption that duration of service is directly related to the level of self-efficacy in general. The longer is the period of service, the higher is self-efficacy, and opposite, the shorter is the period, the lower is self-efficacy in general ($p<0.05$). Similar outcomes are when dealing military ranks. The higher is the rank, the higher is self-efficacy in general, and opposite ($p<0.05$). Age factor is also not an exception. The older is officer the higher is self-efficacy in general and opposite ($p<0.05$).

Table 6. Comparison of officers' social factors and self-efficacy in TLP (N=89)

Social factor	Low self-efficacy		Higher self-efficacy		P
	Number of participants	Mean rank	Number of participants	Mean rank	p<0.05
Age group	42	49.76	41	34.05	**0.00**
Military rank	44	44.05	41	41.88	0.66
Period of service	42	47.38	41	36.49	**0.03**

The tesults given in Table 6 show that mean ranks of two social factors and self-efficacy in TLP differ. According to the results, we make an assumption that length of service is a negative factor for self-efficacy in TLP. The longer is military service period, the lower is self-efficacy in TLP, and the shorter is the period, the higher is self-efficacy in TLP ($p<0.05$). The outcome dealing with the age factor shows that younger officers are more efficient and older officers' self-efficacy in TLP is decreasing with age ($p<0.05$). The data obtained in this research shows that the military rank does not have significant difference to self-efficacy in TLP ($p>0.05$).

Table 7. Comparison of officers' decision in military operations and self-efficacy in general (N=89)

Psychological factors	Number of military task	Successful decision in military tasks		Unsuccessful decision in military tasks		P
		Number of participants	Mean rank	Number of participants	Mean rank	p<0.05
Self-efficacy in general	1.	36	56.61	53	37.11	**0.00**
	2.	31	47.26	58	43.79	0.54
	3.	23	54.35	66	41.74	**0.04**
	4.	27	57.59	61	38.70	**0.01**
	5.	59	48.71	30	37.70	0.06
	6.	36	49.06	53	42.25	0.22
	7.	31	45.10	58	44.95	0.97
	8.	29	43.45	60	45.75	0.69
	9.	22	57.45	67	40.91	**0.00**
	10.	36	51.81	53	40.38	**0.04**

Officers with higher self-efficacy in general more often choose successful decisions (number 1, 3, 4, 9 and number 10) ($p<0.05$). Also, officers with higher self-efficacy in general, comparing with officers with lower self-efficacy, more often choose successful decisions in other tasks (task number 2, 5, 6, 7 and number 8). However, these tasks have no statistical significant difference ($p>0.05$). It means that officers, despite their self-efficacy level, can equally choose right or wrong decisions. This part of research shows that higher self-efficacy in general appears when maintenance of LT statehood and sovereignty and given specific military task is mainly blocking is the main goal of the military task. Lower or higher self-efficacy in general can equally appear when safety of important specific objects that would damage states' specific spheres like energy, transportation or economy and specific military tasks are disrupting and disturbing are the main goals. One more important fact is that the factor of civilians in theatre of military actions decreases self-efficacy in general.

Table 8. Comparison of officers' decisions in military operations and self-efficacy in TLP (N=89)

Psychological factors	Number of military task	Successful decision in military tasks		Unsuccessful decision in military tasks		P
		Number of participants	Mean rank	Number of participants	Mean rank	$p<0.05$
Self-efficacy in TLP	1.	36	62.06	53	33.42	**0.00**
	2.	31	58.35	58	37.86	**0.00**
	3.	23	58.48	66	40.30	**0.04**
	4.	27	54.87	61	39.91	**0.01**
	5.	59	49.90	30	35.37	**0.01**
	6.	36	53.47	53	39.25	**0.01**
	7.	31	45.94	58	44.50	0.82
	8.	29	54.55	60	40.38	**0.01**
	9.	22	58.91	67	40.43	**0.04**
	10.	36	54.15	53	38.78	**0.00**

The results in Table Nr. 8 show that officers with higher self-efficacy in TLP more often choose successful decisions in specific military tasks ($p<0.05$). One unsuccessful decision with self-efficacy in TLP was made in the military task number 7 ($p>0.05$). So, it is obvious that there is one important factor that influences level of self-efficacy in TLP. This is opponent's air force factor. The respondents showed their hesitation in successful TLP procedures during their tasks when they faced enemy with air support.

The results of this study disclose that social factors are not a significant issue in successful and unsuccessful decision-making groups. Officers' age ($p>0.05$), military rank ($p>0.05$) and period of service ($p>0.05$) are similar in both decision-making groups.

Discussion of Results

Evaluation of officers' decision-making and psychosocial factors. According to the fact that younger officers step by step make standard analysis of given situations during TLP procedures, a detail analysis of the decision-making process was not an object of this research. The aim of this research was to compare decision-making factors that are connected with the achieved goals and the mistakes made. The research conducted in the field of military psychology shows that social factors and their analysis are related to accomplishment of more

effective military tasks (Labuc, 1991). Research conducted by other authors suggest that a high self-efficacy level often reports fewer choices and drives decision-makers to easier and faster decisions and directly lead them to reduction of mistakes (Bandura & Wood, 1989; Helper & Feltz, 2012).

The results of this research supplement previous studies of Bandura and Wood (1989) and Helper and Feltz (2012) in the psychological field of self-efficacy. The results of this research show that social factors are important to self-efficacy. Higher self-efficacy in general is related with age, military rank and period of service. Higher self-efficacy in TLP is related to age and period of service. A military rank does not have any significant difference to self-efficacy in TLP. This study shows that higher self-efficacy in general is related to a situation when maintenance of LT statehood and sovereignty and specific military operation is blocking is an end state of a military task. A lower self-efficacy in general is related to a situation when safety of important specific objects that would damage states' specific spheres like energy, transportation or economy and specific military operation are disrupting and disturbing are an end state of military tasks. Higher self-efficacy in TLP is related to successful decisions in nine different specific military tasks. In this part there is one important factor that influences the level of self-efficacy in TLP. This is opponent's air force factor. The respondents showed their hesitation in successful TLP procedures during their tasks when they faced enemy with air support. The results of this study disclosed that social factors did not have significant influence to successful and unsuccessful decisions. Summarised obtained research results confirm that psychological factors, comparing with social factors, are more important to officers' successful decisions.

This research can be useful to scientists who will analyse decision-making effectiveness in specific military tasks. It would be purposeful in further research to compare self-efficacy in general in different branches of armed forces (air force, ground force, navy). That kind of information could be used in military personnel selection and development process. Also, the obtained data on self-efficacy of officers' from different battalions can be compared and outcomes can be used as guidelines for further personnel development. The training or development of psychological factors (self-efficacy in general and self-efficacy in TLP) should be included in officers' mental resilience or other psychological learning programme.

Conclusions

Generalisation of the study findings resulted in the following conclusions:

1. Social factors, like age, military rank and period of service, are important to self-efficacy. The age and period of service are important factors to higher self-efficacy in TLP, too. A military rank does not have significant difference to self-efficacy in TLP.
2. Psychological factors are useful to successful decisions in military tasks. Higher self-efficacy in general appears when maintenance of LT statehood and sovereignty and given specific military task is mainly blocking is the main goal of military task. Lower or higher self-efficacy in general can equally appear when safety of important specific objects that would damage states' specific spheres like energy, transportation or economy and specific military tasks are disrupting and disturbing are the main goals. Officers with higher self-efficacy in TLP more often choose successful decisions in nine different specific military tasks.
3. Social factors are not important to successful decisions. Officers with different age, military rank and period of service can equally often choose right or wrong decisions in military tasks.

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Summary

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The research on psychosocial aspects of the decision-making in military is important because it can reduce damage that military actions usually cause, and right decisions can lead to faster and more constructive exit from the active conflict. The analysis of scientific literature reveals that in military decision making process we can find many factors that military decision-makers are facing all the time. We can find articles on psychological, social, informative and cultural factors of the decision-making in the military. All of these factors make a significant influence. The literature analysis reveals that there are three most important factor groups in the military decision-making process: psychological, social and situational factors. In this pilot study, we compare social and psychological factors that can influence the decision-making in the military.

The literature analysis suggests that there are many social factors which are related to the military decision-making. Brian Hildebrand (2016) created a tool for analysing social factors in military situations. This tool was created on the lessons learned basis after military operations in Afghanistan and Iraq. The purpose of this tool is to help officers with the analysis and includes seven specific social factors in the decision-making process (Hildebarg, 2016). We can observe that the purpose of this method/ tool is similar to Crick and Dodge theory of social information processing which emphasizes the number of coded stimuli (Crick, Dodge, 1994, 1996; Dodge, Schwarts, 1997). Although empirical studies of social information processing theory are more relevant to adolescents and criminals, it can be assumed that a greater number of stimuli is associated with more effective solutions not only in the civilian life. The research that was done in the field of military psychology shows that social factors and their analysis are related to more effective military tasks accomplishments (Labuc, 1991). In this context, it is appropriate to include a group of social elements in the study of decision-making factors for junior officers of land forces in order to find out which social factors are at the very heart of the decision-making process.

In this study, self-efficacy was analysed as the most important psychological factor in the military decision-making. Self-efficacy is important to each of us because it affects the behaviour of our daily activities. Self-efficacy is perceived as person's beliefs of one's ability to choose and perform specific actions and successfully accomplish tasks and achieve goals (Bandura, 1977, 1986; Bandura, Wood, 1989; Solberg et al., 2005). Depending on the level of self-efficacy, the person raises the corresponding goals, behaves in a certain way and expects specific results (Bandura, 2002; Hughes et al., 2011). The aforementioned assumptions of A. Bandung's theory (1986, 2002) can also be successfully applied to self-efficacy of the analysis of the warrior. The results of the research indicate that soldiers with high level of self-efficacy tend to continue their assigned tasks despite strong physical and psychological stress (Gruber et al., 2009). The research from other authors suggest that high level self-efficacy often reports fewer choices and drives decision-makers to easier and faster decisions that directly lead to reduction of mistakes (Bandura, Wood, 1989; Helper, Feltz, 2012).

However, the data of the analysed research does not include officers' (tactical level commanders) self-efficacy. Therefore, it remains unclear whether self-efficacy of the officers is related to successful accomplishment of military tasks. After analysing military tasks and other doctrinal documents, we realised that in order to compare successful tasks of junior officers and self-efficacy it would be expedient

to investigate what officers' self-efficacy consists of. Considering the specificity of military tasks we have found that officers' self-efficacy has two main parts: self-efficacy in general and self-efficacy in TLP. Self-efficacy in general includes officer beliefs about their ability to perform basic military tasks. The second aspect of officers' self-efficacy involves officer's beliefs about one's ability to use TLP in the decision-making.

The aim of this pilot study is to compare social (rank, time of service, marital status) and psychological (self-efficacy in general; self-efficacy in TLP) factors in the military decision-making.

It was found that:

1. Social factors, like age, military rank and period of service, are important to self-efficacy. The age and period of service are important factors to higher self-efficacy in TLP, too. A military rank does not have any significant difference to self-efficacy in TLP.
2. Psychological factors are useful to successful decisions in military tasks. Higher self-efficacy in general appears when maintenance of LT statehood and sovereignty and given specific military task is mainly blocking is the main goal of military task. Lower or higher self-efficacy in general can equally appear when safety of important specific objects that would damage states' specific spheres like energy, transportation or economy and specific military tasks are disrupting and disturbing are the main goals. Officers with higher self-efficacy in TLP more often choose successful decisions in nine different specific military tasks.
3. Social factors are not important to successful decisions. Officers with different age, military rank and period of service can equally often choose right or wrong decisions in military tasks.

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