

PSYCHOLOGICAL PREPARATION FOR EXTREME CONDITIONS IN MILITARY HIGHER EDUCATION

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Abstract

This scientific article provides a comprehensive analysis of the problem of psychological preparation for extreme conditions from the perspective of military psychology and the military education system. The factors affecting the psyche of military personnel in extreme situations, as well as stress and adaptation mechanisms, are examined on a scientific and theoretical basis. Modern methods of psychological preparation - psychological training, stress inoculation, simulation and modeling, cognitive-behavioral approaches, and psychophysiological preparation techniques – are systematically presented. The research results allow for the development of practical recommendations for improving psychological preparation for extreme conditions within the military education system.

Keywords: Extreme conditions, psychological preparation, stress, adaptation, military psychology, stress resilience, simulation.

Introduction

Today, military service is becoming increasingly complex due to global political changes, regional conflicts, terrorism, extremism, and hybrid threats. A modern military serviceman is required to be highly prepared not only physically and tactically but also psychologically. Combat operations, special missions, emergency situations, and peacekeeping tasks, carried out under extreme conditions, have a significant impact on the human psyche.

During service in extreme conditions, military personnel are forced to make decisions under constant threat, uncertainty, time constraints, and high responsibility. These circumstances lead to stress, emotional strain, mental fatigue, fear, and anxiety. If a serviceman is not psychologically prepared for such

situations, his performance decreases, the likelihood of errors increases, and executing combat tasks may result in serious consequences. Therefore, psychological preparation for extreme conditions must be considered a priority task within the military education system.

In the context of modern military security, officer training should not be limited to tactical and physical preparation but must also ensure the development of psychological resilience. Experience shows that insufficient psychological preparation leads to reduced decision-making efficiency, increased emotional instability, and lower operational effectiveness.

In military higher education institutions, training cadets for extreme conditions is often presented within the framework of general psychology, without adequately considering the specific requirements of military activity. In reality, military extreme activity is characterized by constant threat, uncertainty, time pressure, and high responsibility, forming a unique psychological environment. In such conditions, the human psyche activates rapid adaptation mechanisms or, conversely, may break down under stress.

From a psychological perspective, extreme conditions are situations that endanger life, health, or professional activity and disrupt normal behavioral and cognitive patterns. For military personnel, these situations are not occasional but an integral part of professional activity. Therefore, psychological preparation should be organized as a systematic and continuous process within the military education system.

Extreme conditions challenge the adaptive capacity of the human psyche. In such environments, individuals employ mechanisms for rapid decision-making, self-control, and maintaining emotional stability. Extreme situations are characterized by: high levels of threat and uncertainty; time pressure; limited or excessive information; physical and emotional strain; and increased social and professional responsibility. For military personnel, psychological readiness for these conditions ensures professional stability.

Analysis of psychological states in extreme conditions indicates that stress is the primary psychological mechanism at work. According to Hans Selye's stress theory, stress at an appropriate level activates the organism and facilitates adaptation. However, prolonged or uncontrolled stress leads to mental fatigue, decreased emotional stability, and impaired decision-making abilities. In cadets, these effects are observed during training and intensify in subsequent service.

Psychological preparation for extreme conditions relies on several scientific and theoretical approaches. Activity theory emphasizes that human actions are goal-directed, making the preservation of purpose crucial even in extreme conditions. Stress and adaptation theories explain how individuals adjust to external influences. Cognitive-behavioral approaches focus on the relationship between thought patterns and behavior, aiming to replace negative cognitive models with positive strategies. The concept of psychological resilience develops the ability to maintain self-control under extreme conditions.

Key methods for developing psychological readiness include psychological training, stress inoculation, simulation and modeling, cognitive-behavioral techniques, and psychophysiological preparation. Psychological training develops stress resilience, communication skills, and teamwork abilities. Stress inoculation exposes personnel to minor stressors to prepare them for major challenges. Simulation and modeling recreate combat or emergency scenarios to provide near-realistic experience. Cognitive-behavioral preparation helps control negative thinking and improve decision-making. Psychophysiological techniques, such as breathing exercises, relaxation, and autogenic training, enhance psychological stability.

In military higher education institutions, psychological preparation should be systematic, phased, and interdisciplinary. Theoretical knowledge must be integrated with practical exercises, and cadets' psychological states should be continuously monitored. Collaboration among military psychologists, instructors, and commanders is essential for effective implementation.

Thus, the main goal of psychological preparation for extreme conditions is not the complete elimination of stress but the development of skills to manage it, maintain psychological stability, and ensure effective performance under pressure. Among the most effective methods in military higher education are psychological trainings, which foster stress resilience, emotional self-control, and teamwork. Simulations and modeling provide realistic practice in extreme situations, reducing stress impact during actual service. Cognitive-behavioral methods replace negative thought patterns with rational decision-making strategies. Psychophysiological techniques restore psychological resources and reduce emotional strain, with the advantage that they can be applied independently during service.

Research indicates that psychological preparation is most effective when integrated into the entire military education process, rather than being treated as a single course or isolated activity. Theoretical instruction should be combined with practical exercises, and continuous monitoring of cadets' psychological state is necessary.

In conclusion, psychological preparation for extreme conditions is a crucial factor determining the quality of officer training in military higher education institutions. Military specialists with psychological resilience are capable of responsible, independent, and effective decision-making in extreme situations. Therefore, integrating scientific developments in this area into the military education system remains an urgent and essential task.

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