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Studies on Leadership: Research, Development, and Practice, based on evidence at Agulhas Negras Military Academy

Atilio Sozzi Nogueira, George Hamilton de Souza Pinto, and Marcos Aguiar de Souza

Abstract: This paper aims to present the approaches, scientific research, and practices, based on evidence, of the measurement and development of leadership during the military superior training course of the Brazilian Army’s military training line. The Agulhas Negras Military Academy (AMAN) is the higher education institution that trains the combatant career officers. In their five years of training at a boarding school, the cadets are subjected to a teaching program aimed at developing the leadership of the future military officer. Research and leadership approaches seek to better understand some of the main variables that support the development of the future leader. In this study, four tools that contribute to the observation and development of leadership are presented: (1) Macroprocess of leadership development—set of training practices and routines; (2) System of observation, development and attitudinal evaluation—referring to transversal competences (soft skills); (3) Analysis of work networks—based on sociometric analysis that allows a better understanding, in graphic form, of the social forces of the groups and the emergence of leadership; and (4) Psychological variables (self-esteem, self-efficacy, coping, locus of control and mindfulness) that are related to the leadership and are strategic for the cadet’s self-knowledge. One concludes that the scientific research of the studied variables contributes to a better understanding of the leadership phenomenon, becoming a useful tool for the context of higher education in other military contexts.

Keywords: Leadership; Brazilian Army; Agulhas Negras Military Academy; Transversal Competences; Network Analysis; Psychological Variables.

Introduction

The Agulhas Negras Military Academy (AMAN) is the only educational institution that trains the career combat officers of the Brazilian Army basic branches (Infantry, Cavalry, Artillery, Signal Corps, and Engineering), the Quartermaster and the Ordnance. Its cadets, in addition to military training, receive university education throughout the course, enabling them to hold a bachelor’s degree in military science.¹

The course takes place during a five-year period, with the first year being taken at the Preparatory School for Army Cadets (EsPCEEx), located in the city of Campinas-SP and the following four years at AMAN, all in boarding school. Currently, the academy has a total of 1,681 cadets (each training class has about 420 cadets, approximately 10 percent of whom are female).

AMAN aims to reconcile, in a balanced and simultaneous way, academic education (scientific and humanistic basis) with military education (technical and professional knowledge). The academic year for the four years of the course has an average of 1,669 hours of general curricular activities, of which 784 hours (47 percent) are dedicated only...
to military activities (theoretical and practical). These can normally last from one to five
days and are mostly given at the academy’s own premises and in its field of instruction (25
square miles in length).

Considered the Army’s “School of Leaders,” AMAN plans and streamlines activities
that aim to assist the future officer, both in the learning process and in his vocational
orientation. The academy finds in its Psychopedagogic Section a tool for monitoring
cadets, which helps them to understand their potential, capacities, and opportunities for
improvement, aiming at the development of attitudes and values, as well as favoring the
continuous progress of the cognitive, attitudinal, and psychomotor areas.

The Psychopedagogic Section is responsible for contributing so that the teaching
contains: the understanding of the cadets in relation to the fundamental precepts of the
Armed Forces (discipline and hierarchy), as well as the cult of historical figures and the
values of the Army, and the development of the military spirit (ethos), the feeling of duty
and its character, all aiming at the development of leadership.

Among the activities conducted by AMAN that aim to improve the leadership of
its cadets, four tools stand out: (1) Macro leadership development process; (2) System
of observation, development, and attitudinal evaluation; (3) Network analysis; and (4)
Psychological variables as it can be seen in Figure 1, below:

![Figure 1. Tools for leadership development](image)

1. Leadership development macroprocess

2. Observation, development and attitudinal assessment system

3. Network analysis (graphs)

4. Psychological variables
Leadership Development Macroprocess

Military leadership is an instrument for commanders to move their men and women through their professional competence and personal effort, and not only through the imposition of rules and regulations. Traditionally, the topic has been widely studied in military contexts and because it is a complex, fascinating and controversial issue, the systematization of the educational process to support leadership development requires an elaborate process from AMAN.

AMAN has developed, over time, a curricular routine with a series of activities aimed at the development of leadership. Some of these actions will be presented in this topic, which can be categorized as a “leadership development macroprocess,” which proposes to favor the integration of activities, systematic and unsystematic, which generate inputs and outputs of information and stimuli, and thus provide observation, the development and conscious and intentional assessment of leadership in the military academic context. In summary, the ten macroprocess tools can be categorized and presented as follows:

Tool no. 1 (T1) - Officer serving at AMAN:

Considered the main tool of macroprocess. Officers who serve in AMAN as instructors and teachers must be good examples and role models to be emulated and exert, directly or indirectly, influence in the formation of the cadet. Currently, around 200 officers in the Corps of Cadets and 120 in the teaching division serve at the academy, for an effective 1,681 cadets, which points to the ratio of one officer to five cadets in direct daily contact.

T2 - Academic Subjects:

Taught by the teaching division, academic subjects consist of more than twenty different university subjects that make up the curriculum for the bachelor’s degree in military sciences. In addition to the general culture, which helps in the formation of robust and integrative thinking for future officers, these disciplines aim to internalize the values and attitudes necessary for the leader in the cadets. Some examples of subjects taught are military law, law, languages, statistics, cybernetics, and psychology.

T3 - Military Instruction:

Conducted by the Corps of Cadets, this instruction consists of a set of theoretical and practical disciplines, developed during day and night instruction times, which aim to prepare cadets specifically for the military profession. Through combat simulation, these disciplines provide cadets with support for solving military problems. Maneuvers, military techniques, special instruction, shooting and physical education are examples of these subjects.

T4 - Cadet Command Capacity Development:

Throughout the course, cadets regularly participate in situations in which they are required to assume command-related functions. Examples are scale services, organizers
of student associations, assistant officers, commanders of small fractions of cadets, both in academic routine and in military exercises, etc. In these situations, the cadets acquire and develop the social-emotional skills necessary for the exercise of command, being evaluated and guided by their commanding officers.

**T5 - Development of the Cadet’s Military Identity:**

Throughout the course, and especially when in command functions, especially during military instructions, the cadet is systematically observed by his superiors, and his actions are subject to feedback, both verbal and immediate, as well as those that are registered disciplinarily. These guidelines aim at consciously internalizing and structuring values consistent with the requirements of military life, especially those relating to command and leadership in combat.

**T6 - Influence Groups:**

To accompany the educational process, the learning and adjustment of cadets, periodic meetings are held that seek to propose interdisciplinary solutions. These meetings, called “influence groups,” are composed of teachers, instructors, teaching support professionals, such as doctors and psychopedagogic professionals, who are in frequent contact with the cadets and, within their sphere of assignment, can act in the educational process. These meetings seek to anticipate possible issues that may hinder or prevent the teaching-learning process from occurring fully.

**T7 - Military Leadership Discipline:**

Regarding specifically to formal leadership education, AMAN has a Leadership Section, which has developed a teaching manual that provides cadets with theoretical support. At the same time, this section advises other sectors of the academy on the subject and conducts around 56 hours of theoretical and practical instruction with the cadets.

**T8 - Communication Project:**

When exercising command functions, together with their peers and in front of more modern cadets hierarchically, cadets practice oral and bodily expression, providing opportunities to improve their skills in the use of narrative and argumentative language, through which their team members will interpret their messages with respect and trust.

**T-9 - Interpersonal Competence Development Project:**

Throughout the course, cadets are observed by superiors and peers, and their actions are the target of feedback, both immediate and verbal (unsystematic) and those that generate some type of record and disciplinary consequences (systematic). In addition to the command functions already mentioned, the daily interaction in accommodation, classrooms, cafeterias, etc., can be highlighted.
T10 - Observation, development, and attitudinal assessment system:

The attitudinal area is fundamental for the training of cadets, i.e., future military leaders, in AMAN. Great effort has been made to materialize the records of attitudes on objective bases, creating a database through which descriptive and inferential analyzes of this phenomenon can be made. These analyzes indicate that the system of observation, development and attitudinal assessment has been confirmed as a predictor of desirable skills in cadets, such as leadership, as can be seen in detail in the next topic of this article.

Thus, it is concluded that the leadership development macroprocess consolidates the AMAN curricular process and allows the teaching of leadership theory, associated with the experience of academic and military routines. In this environment in which the cadet lives with their instructors, teachers, and peers, the macroprocess presents the young student with useful tools for exercising leadership.

Observation, Development, and Evaluation of Attitudes System

AMAN, since 2012, has started to implement teaching by skills. Thus, in addition to technical skills (hard skills) traditionally taught and valued over the centuries, such as academic and military subjects, transversal skills (soft skills) such as attitudes, moral capabilities, and values. Thus, the AMAN curriculum document (Professional Profile) also includes soft skills.

The academy has implemented its own system of observation, development, and evaluation of soft skills. This process is measured and favors the cadet’s self-knowledge, serving as one of the bases for the exercise of leadership, a fact corroborated by an extensive literature, which links leadership in organizations with behaviors and attitudes, as well as the series of studies that have been developed at AMAN since 2012.

Students are observed by the instructors, teachers, and other companions during curricular activities. The observations are launched in their own internal systems, such as the Cadets and Students Conceptualization Module (evaluation). The development takes place all the time in activities such as classes, instructions, physical activities, scale services, group work, exercises in the field, sports competitions, etc., as well as in extracurricular activities, such as living together in the accommodation, social interaction in academic unions, during releases, layoffs, and recesses.

The assessment takes place in a holistic and integrating way, seeking to measure the development of military identity throughout the course, synthesizing in grades (degrees) the cadet’s performance, integrating the meritocracy process, and providing subsidies for decisions, from a complete picture of the students’ attitudinal profile. In this sense, the act of evaluating transversal competences contributes to the detection of possible difficulties in the attitudinal development, favoring the orientation and correction of attitudes.
As for the type, the assessment is divided into self-assessment, lateral assessment, and vertical assessment. The first is carried out by the cadet himself and has a formative character (does not generate a grade). The second is carried out by the platoon companions, and the third is centralized by a commission of instructors, who are the immediate commanders of the cadet and who have daily contact and monitoring (platoon and subunit commander).

The evaluation by the cadet’s platoon mates generates the Lateral Concept Note (LCN) and the evaluation by the instructors generates the Vertical Concept Note (VCN). Both assessments (vertical and lateral) are carried out on an 11-point Likert scale. These grades are added to the other grades from the academic and military disciplines and impact the cadet’s classification in the course. If any cadet does not obtain an average of five in the vertical or lateral evaluation, he will be disapproved, and his situation will be submitted to the teaching council.16

AMAN’s summative attitudinal assessment is focused on the group of nineteen attitudes in the Professional Profile (curriculum document): Self-denial, Adaptability, Self-confidence, Comradeship, Combativeness, Cooperation, Decision, Dedication, Intellectual Discipline, Discretion, Emotional Balance, Honesty, Initiative, Loyalty, Organization, Persistence, Responsibility, Rusticity, and Sociability.17

It is noteworthy that these nineteen attitudes indicate the desired attitudinal profile for the cadet. The development, observation, and evaluation of these nineteen attitudes favor the formation of the military identity desired by AMAN, and it is understood that these attitudes, when well internalized, will allow future Brazilian Army officers to fully exercise their positions, in order to who can deal with the challenges that the profession will certainly present them throughout their careers.18

To illustrate the importance of the process of observation, development, and evaluation of attitudes and their relationship with the leadership phenomenon, a study was carried out with 417 cadets from the same training class. The military was asked which are the ones that most show leadership in the scope of the peers, with the votes added up. Then, these data were correlated with the degrees of attitude assessment: vertical concept, lateral concept, and self-assessment. Table 1 shows Pearson’s correlations between these variables.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>1.</th>
<th>2.</th>
<th>3.</th>
<th>4.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Leadership realized by peers</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Vertical Concept</td>
<td>0.29**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Lateral Concept</td>
<td>0.30**</td>
<td>0.42**</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Self-Assessment</td>
<td>0.17**</td>
<td>0.25**</td>
<td>0.27**</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Pearson’s correlations between the leadership realized and attitudinal assessment variables
These results are statistically designed and aimed at producing attitudinal content for the leadership development process at AMAN.

**Network Analysis (Graphs)**

Sociometry and analysis tools for work networks greatly contribute to the understanding of characteristics that favor the phenomenon of the emergence of leaders in different contexts, especially the military. Through sociometry, it is possible to survey and measure the social forces within groups and, through the use of work networks, it is possible to graphically indicate who the leaders of the groups are, the compositions of the subgroups, the isolated individuals, those that exert greater or lesser influence on the group, etc.\(^{19}\)

Sociometric and other network analysis tools contribute greatly to the understanding of characteristics that favor the phenomenon of the emergence of leaders in different contexts, especially the military. Sociometric analysis consists of an advanced and orderly technique of the tendency to measure and describe the dynamics of the groups, determining the position of everyone in the group in which he exercises a defined role, including those of leadership.\(^{20}\)

In the network analysis methodology, individuals can be represented by nodes and the processes of choosing directional or bidirectional edges, which help in detecting the emergence of leaders. The graphical presentation (graph) can also show the levels of affinity, from the distance between the nodes. This procedure is used not only to verify the behavior of groups in organizations,\(^{20}\) but also for semantic or psychometric analysis.\(^{21}\)

To illustrate the use of this tool in helping to understand the emergence of the phenomenon of leadership, Figure 2 presents an example of network analysis resulting from a sociometric test carried out with a cadet platoon.

The work network in Figure 2 was composed based on the perceptions of leadership within the group with thirty-four members. It can be partially concluded in a first analysis of the data obtained in the figure that platoon has five subgroups. The “purple” subgroup has the largest strength (eleven cadets), is the most central and comprises three very chosen cadets “B,” “U,” and “D.” The “light green” subgroup has the second largest number (eight cadets) and showed a tendency to move away from the platoon as a whole, with the “Y” cadet standing out in this subgroup. The other subgroups in order of importance are “orange” (with emphasis on cadet “M”), “blue” and “dark green.” It is concluded that cadets “B,” “D,” “M,” and “U” received many of the total votes, including from members of other subgroups, which suggests the ability to lead with peers.

With this information, the commanding officer of the cadet platoon was able to better understand the internal social forces of his subordinates and acted to intentionally integrate the cadets of the “light green” subgroup with the others. In addition, the officer...
was better able to employ the “B,” “D,” “M,” and “U” cadets for those missions in which leadership competence was most required, such as cadets in command roles in military instructions practices.

Figure 2. Example of network analysis (leadership)

**Psychological Variables**

Scientific research on psychological variables and their relationship with the leadership phenomenon is a constant activity of the Psychopedagogic Section. These variables allow better interventions to be made with cadets, offering them tools so that they can develop skills that ensure their ability to lead.

As a result of almost a decade of research on the subject, among the psychological variables studied, it was found that some are considered as more relevant or central, as predictors of adaptability to military higher education and the leadership development process, which are: (1) self-esteem; (2) self-efficacy; (3) coping; (4) locus of control; and (5) mindfulness. This section will present a brief definition of each variable and, at the end, the results of a comparative study with the leadership.

**1) Self-esteem:**

Self-esteem can be understood as the degree to which the qualities and characteristics contained in the concept of self (self-concept) are perceived as positive. It reflects the
subject’s physical self-image and his view of his own achievements, capacities and values. The more positive the perception of these qualities and characteristics is, the greater the self-esteem. A reasonably high degree of self-esteem is considered an important component of mental health.

Considered an important predictor of favorable results, both in adolescence and in adulthood, it has a direct relationship with occupational success and academic performance. This phenomenon has been researched at AMAN and the results indicate its importance for school success.

(2) Self-efficacy:

It refers to the subject’s belief about the ability to successfully perform some activity. The understanding of the construct refers to the Social Cognitive Theory, whose doctrinal essence attributes to the person the profile of the agent of their development process. As an agent, the individual intentionally influences the processes, changing the circumstances of life and himself.

In this perspective, people have control of the action; are self-organized, self-reflective, creative, proactive, and self-controlled; and are not dependent on environmental influences. This is a study with favorable results at AMAN and has a correlation with the development of leadership in the military educational process.

(3) Coping:

Coping strategies can be understood as the set of cognitive and behavioral strategies developed by the subject to deal with the internal and external demands of the person-environment relationship, which are assessed as excessive, and the emotional reactions caused by these demands. Coping can be evaluated from different dimensions, being considered in this study: (1) Control is related to emotion, behavior, avoiding hasty action; (2) Conversion is associated with social and behavioral withdrawal, and the individual can take refuge in the imaginary and in the dream; (3) Social distraction seeks to carry out activities with the help and support of others; (4) Social support is the desire or need for help through collective work or asking for advice; and (5) Refusal is the denial of the adverse situation or denying that there is a problem.

Research results indicate that cadets have been making greater use of strategies that are positive from the point of view of facing the challenges they encounter. Coping strategies can be hierarchical, considering the degree to which they are desirable in the military training environment: control strategies, followed by social support, social distraction, and withdrawal, form this logical sequence.
(4) Locus of control:

The locus of control refers to the basic motivation of people in relation to guidelines and perceptions about how much control they have in the different situations of their lives. Thus, the person can perceive himself as controlling events or as being controlled by factors external to it. Some individuals believe that they own their own destiny, while others perceive themselves as a product of chance, thinking that everything that happens to them is the result of factors that are out of their control. The first type tends to have the “internal control locus” and the second the “locus of external control.” Externality is not necessarily bad or undesirable, when at low levels; however, a high degree of externality is associated with difficulties to face the natural challenges of life, which in military contexts is a factor that deserves attention as well, because there was a difference between people who believe in the power of others over themselves and people who perceive the world as unpredictable and uncontrollable. In this way, there are three dimensions of control: I (internality), P (other powerful externalities) and C (chance externalities).

Internal individuals (high internality) tend to be more successful at work and more satisfied with it. They actively seek information before making a decision, are more motivated to achieve, and strive more to gain control over their environment. Thus, this group performs better in more sophisticated tasks and executive functions, which require initiative and processing of complex information, as is the case of the cadet.

(5) Mindfulness:

Mindfulness refers to being present in what is happening, without preconceptions or judgments. Mindfulness is much more than paying attention. It is a way of training the mind, heart, and body to be fully present in life. It is both a practice and a way of life.

The benefits of mindfulness have led organizations to help their employees manage stress, increase emotional intelligence, and develop leadership potential. In the military context, this phenomenon has been studied and practiced in the armed forces, as in the U.S. Army and the U.S. Marines. In the Brazilian Army’s academy, the theme has been explored with encouraging initial results.

In order to present how these variables are related to leadership, in the case of the formation of AMAN, an empirical study was carried out with 417 cadets from the same training class. Initially, the participants underwent the sociometric test, indicating the companions who, in their perceptions, most evidenced leadership in the context of peers. Then, all responded to the scales of the psychological variables presented, on a 5-point Likert scale. For the analysis, respondents were divided into two groups: (a) those who received at least one vote (236); and (b) those who did not receive votes (181). Finally, the averages of the scores received were compared between those who did not receive votes and the subgroup composed of the first decile of those who received votes (24), using the student test for independent samples. The results indicated that, according to this research, there is a difference between the averages of the groups (p <0.001), as can be seen in Table 2:
Table 2. Differences in the average score obtained between those who did not receive votes and the first decile of those who did

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>First leadership decile</th>
<th>Participants who didn’t get any votes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Self-esteem</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>4.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Self-efficacy</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Coping (control)</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Coping (social support)</td>
<td>3.20</td>
<td>3.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Coping (refusal)</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>2.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Coping (social distraction)</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>3.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Locus of control (I)</td>
<td>3.53</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Locus of control (P)</td>
<td>2.00</td>
<td>2.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Locus of control (C)</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>2.43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Mindfulness</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>3.39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Conclusion**

This paper aimed to present some of the practices carried out during military training at AMAN that had as purpose the cadet leadership development, based on evidence, being categorized in four dimensions: (1) Leadership development macroprocess; (2) System of observation, development, and attitudinal evaluation; (3) Network analysis; and (4) Psychological variables. The leadership development macroprocess illustrates how consolidation of the curriculum, over more than two hundred years, made it possible for the teaching of leadership theory, together with the experience of academic and military routines, in a context in which the cadet lives with instructors, teachers, and peers, offering young people useful tools for exercising leadership.

The system of observation, development, and attitudinal evaluation in the course allows cadets not only to learn technical skills, but also to access an education focused on transversal skills, such as values and attitudes, considered essential for the future military officer. The use of sociometric and the network analysis allows teachers and students to better understand, with graphic support, how the social forces related to the emergence of leadership take place, facilitating their interventions. Finally, the study of some of the psychological variables allows instructors and teachers the best knowledge of cadets, and students, self-knowledge and self-development. It is hoped that the practices presented here can serve as a support and reference for studies and interventions aimed at the development of leadership in other military academies.
Atílio Sozzi Nogueira is a major in the Brazilian Army and has served in the Psychopedagogic Section of the Agulhas Negras Military Academy since 2015. He is a doctoral student in psychology at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro. He has a master’s degree in psychology at the Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro (2018); majored in sociology at Paulista University (2018); and holds a bachelor’s degree in military sciences from AMAN (2002). He has a specialization in military operations (Captains Career Course, 2011) and in academic psychopedagogy for officers by the Center for Personnel Studies and Forte Duque de Caxias (2014). He has experience and interest in studies and interventions on positive psychology applied in military contexts, leadership, and instruments for the observation, development, and evaluation of soft skills.

George Hamilton de Souza Pinto has a degree in physical education as well as a master’s degree in psychology from UFRRJ - Research Line in Psychosocial and Collective Processes (2015-2017). He is a doctoral student in psychology at UFRJ. He holds a major in sociology and a bachelor’s in military science from AMAN (1993). He has a professional master’s degree in military science (2000-2001). He has a specialization in psychopedagogy (2007). He served as head of the Psychopedagogic Section of the Academics Division at AMAN (2017-2019). He has an interest in the development and measurement of the attitudinal field. He conducts research relating to psychological variables linked to the skills needed by professionals in different contexts.

Marcos Aguiar de Souza is a doctor of psychology and currently serves as a full-time professor at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro. He is interested in social information and its consequences for phenomena such as data collection and analysis techniques, construction, and validation of measurement instruments, as well as in organizational psychology and studies related to health and well-being in military and public security contexts, development leadership and the consequences of the fragility of norms in organizational contexts for the health and quality of life of the worker, namely in relation to bureaucracy and anomie.
Endnotes


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27. Ibid.


37. Ibid., 108-125.


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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH: authors must include a brief biographical sketch, including institutional affiliation, primary publications, and relevant experience. Length should be 200 words or less.


Books: Feldman, Lily Gardner, Germany’s Foreign Policy of Reconciliation: From Enmity to Amity (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2012), 20-33


For multiple notes referencing the same work, please use the following shortened note form after the first reference. Feldman, Germany’s Foreign Policy of Reconciliation, 73-78. Roehrig, “Stability or Instability?,” 131.
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