

## ADAPTATION OF MIXED-GENDER UNIT MEMBERS TO WORKING ENVIRONMENT

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**Abstract:** Adaptation is a process of changing a person in accordance with characteristics and requirements of the social environment. It can be social, psychological and physiological. The adaptation of members of the mixed-gender military units (officers, non-commissioned officers and professional soldiers) to all specifics of military organization (manner and organization of work, restrictions, psychological and physical strains, etc.) is certainly a specific process, especially in relation to other organizations. Accordingly, the objective of the research was to determine the extent to which members of mixed-gender units are adapted to working conditions in military organization and what kind of a relationship between individual characteristics of respondents (sex, age and years of service). The sample includes 453 members of mixed-gender units of the Serbian Armed Forces. Using a rotated component matrix, four isolated factors have been defined. The obtained results indicate the adaptation of a person to a working environment specific to security organizations.

**Keywords:** adaptation, military organization, work environment.

### Graphical abstract



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## INTRODUCTION

Adaptation is a process of harmonizing the needs of a person and their behaviour with possibilities and requirements of the environment. In other words, it is coping with new life situations and getting used to conditions in a new environment, and it can be: *the physical environment*, where a person adapts to physical conditions (spatial environment, climatic conditions, etc.) or *the social environment*, where a person adapts to the requirements set by an organization, with its rules and regulations, which also refers to adaptation in the military environment (Pajević et al., 1995). Accordingly, adaptation can be three-fold: *social adaptation* is reflected in building harmonious relationships and emotional connection with other people; *psychologically* in the feeling of satisfaction and personal suitability and *physiologically* in enduring physical exertion, hunger, thirst, increased temperature, cold and the like (Pajević et al., 1987).

Adaptability is defined in a variety of ways, with most approaches defining this concept as “the ability to modify someone’s responses in order to effectively address task requirements after one or more situational changes”. However, the effectiveness of adaptive performance is largely defined by the successful generalization of acquired knowledge to new tasks (Grand & Kozlovski, 2013). Adaptability appears as “the effective change in response to a changed situation” (White et al., 2005), i. e. changing conditions (Mueller-Hanson et al., 2005). It enables individuals to react quickly and adequately to constant change. At the same time, when they recognize a situation that is similar to previous situations they have already encountered, they usually rely on answers related to such situations and react almost automatically or intuitively. Such decision-making processes are particularly effective in ambiguous situations and in conditions of high pressure when a more structured and normative approach is made difficult (Mueller-Hanson et al., 2005). This approach to decision making relies greatly on prior knowledge and experience.

When it comes to adapting to working conditions, in literature we often come across the construct “career adaptability”. This syntagm is a key construct in career construction theory and reflects a constellation of competencies, attitudes and behaviours of individuals in an effort to “fit into the job that suits them” (Savickas, 2005). According to Savickas (1997), career adaptability means psychosocial characteristics of an individual, i. e. resources for coping with current and projected professional developmental tasks, transition in occupation and work traumas that more or less change their social integration. Similarly, Savickas and Porfeli (2012) define career adaptability as “the strengths or capacities of self-regulation that a person can rely on to solve [...] unknown, complex and undefined problems that represent developmental professional tasks, occupations, transitions and work traumas” (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012). These resources contribute to defining and developing the strategies that individuals use when directing adaptive behaviour.

The Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (CAAS) (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) has become one of the most commonly used questionnaires for assessing career adaptability. This scale has been made on the basis of the research version of the proposed scale of 55 items, and then psychometrically tested in 13 countries. The resulting Career Adapt-Abilities Scale consists of four subscales, and each of them has six items. Four subscales measure Concern, Control, Curiosity and Self-Confidence as psychosocial resources for managing changes in occupation, developmental tasks and work trauma. Concern indicates the extent to which an individual is aware and prepares his or her professional career. Control reflects



beliefs about personal responsibility for career development. Curiosity includes personal preference and ability to explore the professional environment. Self-Confidence includes self-efficacy for problem solving and ability to successfully overcome obstacles in professional activities (Savickas, 2005; Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

The following forms of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale are most often found in literature: CAAS – international form (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012), CASS – US form (Porfeli & Savickas, 2012), CASS – short form (Maggiori et al., 2017), CASS – Russian form (Gumerovna et al., 2021), CAAS - Serbian form (Mirković et al., 2020). The international form for the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012) consists of 24 items that are combined into a total score indicating career adaptability, and are also equally divided into four subscales that measure adaptability resources: Concern, Control, Curiosity and Trust. The reliability of the scale as a whole is .92, and for some dimensions the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficients .93 for Control, .74 for Concern, .79 for Curiosity and .85 for Self-Confidence (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012).

Adaptability has become increasingly important as a significant factor in job performance, as new demands in the workplace require employees to be more flexible and tolerant of uncertainty in order to function successfully in a dynamic work environment (Pulakos et al., 2000; Zacher et al., 2015). In order to better understand and improve adaptability in the workplace, a model with eight dimensions of adaptability performance has been proposed. In this regard, Pulakos et al. (2000) studied adaptive performance requirements in a range of jobs, occupations and task requirements and highlighted the empirical support for the eight-dimensional adaptive performance model: 1) Handling Emergencies or Crisis Situations; 2) Handling Work Stress; 3) Solving Problems Creatively; 4) Dealing Effectively with Unpredictable or Changing Adaptability Work Situations; 5) Learning Work Tasks, Technologies, and Procedures; 6) Demonstrating Interpersonal Adaptability; 7) Demonstrating Cultural Adaptability and 8) Demonstrating Physically Oriented Adaptability (Pulakos et al., 2000). These performances are more or less relevant to a particular type of work.

This adaptability model is the basis for the development of the mentioned adaptive performances, and to facilitate its implementation in the security sector, White et al. (2015) grouped these dimensions into three types of adaptability: Mental Adaptability; Interpersonal Adaptability and Physical Adaptability. Mental adaptability means adapting one's thoughts to new situations in order to overcome difficulties such as dealing with emergencies, stress, etc. Interpersonal adaptability is aimed at unhindered interaction with other people and understanding their needs and motives. Physical adaptability means adaptation to the severity of working conditions (workload, heat, cold, etc.). When it comes to officers, in addition to the mentioned three types of individual adaptability, they have to help in the adaptation of their teams by motivating adaptive behaviour in a team and coordinate the work of team members. Accordingly, the fourth type of adaptability has been added to the mentioned ones - Leading an Adaptable Team. Starting from the mentioned point of view, and relying on the work of Pulakos et al. (2000), a training programme for adaptive performance of Special Forces (SF) officers has been developed (White et al., 2005).

Adaptive performance as a component of the overall performance of employees is the ability of an individual to change their behaviour in order to meet the requirements of the work environment. This construct is relevant for work environments characterized by complex and changing business conditions. However, research and practice face the lack of widely available psychometrically tested multidimensional scales of adaptive performance. In this regard, Charbonnier-Voirin and Patrice Roussel (2012) referred to



the constitution of a new scale of adaptive performance of 19 items that measures five dimensions: creativity, reactivity in the face of emergencies or unexpected circumstances, interpersonal adaptability, training and learning and managing stress.

Tucker and Gunther (2009) presented the results of using a nine-dimensional model of adaptability to critical incidents of leaders' behaviour. The interview results from two sub-samples of the US military leaders (40 combat operations veterans and 24 training leaders) have been studied. According to the obtained results, during fight, the dimensions 'Dealing with unpredictability' and 'Handling emergencies' have been most pronounced, while in the training process, the dimensions 'Leading adaptive teams' and 'Solving Problems Creatively' have been manifested. The studied dimensions of adaptive abilities have varied in different samples. In the process of developing adaptive abilities, the leaders have recommended the development of mental adaptability skills and adaptive teams.

In order to function effectively in a complex security environment, leaders and security personnel have to be adapted to respond to rapid changes of conditions. Among other factors of adaptability, mental endurance means people's resistance to stressful situations. In this regard, the study by Bartone et al. (2013) deals with the assessment of the psychological resistance of cadets to entering the West Point Military Academy as a predictor of leader performance and career adaptability. The results of the research have shown, *inter alia*, that psychological endurance (the aspects of dedication and control) measured in freshmen at the Academy predicts adaptability in officers, which was measured seven years later. Accordingly, they have concluded that "psychological resistance is a promising factor in promoting the development of adaptability".

Adaptability to the working conditions of military organization is particularly important in the dynamic environment of the Special Forces (SF) missions, which has resulted in a greater emphasis on adaptability in their training. Accordingly, the report by White et al. (2005) on Developing Adaptive Proficiency in Special Forces Officers contains a description of a three-day course on the adaptability for the SF missions, officers in particular. The Officer Adaptive Thinking and Leadership course informs students about the importance and ways of adapting officers in the SF conditions. The focus of the training was on mental and interpersonal adaptability, as well as on leading an adapted team. Therefore, the participants get acquainted with the content that is relevant to their SF jobs, providing instruments for their better coping with situations that require these types of adaptability. King (2013) explored the phenomenon of "professionalized cohesion" based on the experiences of the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF). In essence, "the IDF soldiers relied on rapid confidence in order to create cohesion" when their units were reestablished. In his opinion, professional cohesion can be the key to the integration of women in infantry. He concluded that "gender barriers seem to be collapsing [...] and that infantry is increasingly accepting women based on their performance" (King, 2013). However, he points out that there is still significant evidence that many soldiers oppose the presence of women in combat and that "the daily attitudes of male soldiers are likely to be more important in undermining women's integration" (King, 2013, p. 21). This fact, of course, is an obstacle to intensifying the process of gender integration into combat units.

When it comes to indicators of students' adaptation to training, Pajević and Marček (1995) point out the following important indicators: their emotional state, getting used to the conditions of physical and social environment, psychophysical readiness and motivation for training, quality of interpersonal relations and social climate in units, etc. The results



of the research by Šaranović et al. (2016) on the adaptation of cadets confirmed that some social aspects significantly facilitate adaptation, and thus affect educational success. At the same time, the results of the research by Pajević et al. (1995) that “the friendship in a collective” is rather important for the adaptation of cadets, and thus for their educational success, have been confirmed. The other social aspects studied have a similar contribution, such as ‘the cultural, entertainment and sports activities’, ‘the care of superiors’, ‘the teaching staff’ and ‘the teaching engagement’. In contrast, the greatest difficulty to cadets of both sexes represents ‘the way and organization of military life’, given that most cadets meet this lifestyle only by coming to the Military Academy, so it obviously takes more time to adapt to them (Šaranović et al., 2016, p. 178).

The adaptation of individuals to the military environment is a process in which they get used to the main requirements of military life and the norms of behaviour defined by military regulations. Most individuals successfully adapt to the military environment in a relatively short period of time, although the percentage of those who need a longer time for adaptation is not negligible, and some of them remain unadapted. Therefore, the process of adaptation in the military environment covers a longer period of time, given that members of military organization during the performance of professional duties encounter new tasks, exercise, marches, which require increased psychophysical strains (Pajević et al., 1987). In difficult conditions, such as war situations, training for sabotage, reconnaissance and other special tasks, adaptation can be seen as a complex process, whose result is ‘general adaptability’ (Pajević et al., 1995, p. 11).

Unadapted individuals almost always represent a certain problem for their collective and they can be a serious limiting factor for its successful functioning. Of course, the seriousness of such a problem does not depend only on the number of unadapted individuals, but also on specific working conditions in military organization they find difficult to adapt to. Namely, it does not matter whether these are requests that occur from time to time or concern only employees in certain jobs, or whether these are working conditions that equally affect each individual in all working situations, such as, for example, strict subordination of relations, strictly prescribed dress code and rules of mutual address and behaviour, then overtime work in the form of duty, etc. (Šaranović et al., 2021).

The main goal of this research has been to study the adaptability of mixed gender units and institutions of the Serbian Armed Forces to living and working conditions in military organization. The special goals have been aimed at defining basic statistical indicators of adaptability to working conditions in military organization, studying the influence of some personal and status characteristics of respondents on their perception of satisfaction with living and working conditions in military organization (sex, age and years of service). In addition, the factor structure of the perception of working conditions in military organization was determined.

## METHOD

### *Sample*

The research was conducted on a suitable sample of mixed-gender units of the Serbian Armed Forces. The sample included 453 respondents, and the obtained demographic data are given in Table 1.



**Table 1.** *The Personal and Status Characteristics of the Respondents*

Personal and status characteristics	Frequency	Percentage (%)
<i>Sex of respondents</i>		
Male	305	67.3
Female	148	32.7
<i>Age</i>		
Up to 30	178	39.3
From 31 to 40	118	28.5
Above 40	146	32.2
<i>Length of service in SAF</i>		
Up to 5 years	144	31.8
From 6 to 15 years	118	26.0
Over 15 years	191	42.2

### *Variables and indicators*

In order to study the influential factors on the satisfaction with working conditions in military organization of individuals within mixed-gender units, independent and dependent variables and corresponding indicators have been defined. *Independent variables* in this research consisted of personal and status characteristics of respondents and their indicators: 1) sex: a/male and b/female; 2) age: a/up to 30; b/from 31 to 40 and c/over 40 and 3) length of service in the Serbian Armed Forces: a/ up to 5 years; b/ from 6 to 15 years; c/ over 15 years. The set of *dependent variables* consisted of adaptability to living and working conditions in military organization, which was measured by 16 indicators, as follows: 1) Strict subordination of relations; 2) Obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment; 3) Physical exertion at work; 4) Unplanned overtime engagement in the workplace; 5) Mandatory duty; 6) Stressful situations at work; 7) Work complexity; 8) Multi-day separation from family due to exercise; 9) Outdoor work in all weather conditions; 10) Obligation to accept transfer as required by service; 11) Engagement out of the workplace during emergencies; 12) Separation from family for several months (peace operations); 13) Harmonization of family and professional obligations; 14) Ratio of salary to work difficulty; 15) Responsibility for the actions of subordinates and 16) Risk of injury.

### *Techniques and instruments*

On the basis of the defined research objective, the descriptive *Survey research method* has been used in this paper. *Survey* has been used as a research technique, and *the Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization* has been used to collect data. In addition to the main personal and status characteristics (sex, age and length of service in the Armed Forces), the Scale includes 16 items that indicate the characteristics of military



organization that professional military personnel have to count on as common features of the working environment, which they will face daily or occasionally. The task of the respondents was to assess for each of the mentioned 16 working conditions in military organization the extent to which it was difficult for them to accept it as their obligation and get used to it. In accordance with this assessment, with each of the described conditions, they had to circle one of the five listed numbers on the Likert-type scale, so that the number '1' means rather easily, and the number '5' rather difficult to adapt. The reliability of the scale measured by the Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is 0.882, the Spearman-Brown Coefficient is 0.857, and the Guttman Split-Half Coefficient is also 0.857.

### Statistics

*Statistical data processing* was performed using methods of multivariate analysis and the SPSS statistical package programme SPSS 13.0 for Windows. In addition to determining the main parameters of descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, arithmetic mean and standard deviation), statistical data processing included determining the relationship between different characteristics of the respondents and their perception of satisfaction of mixed-gender units with living and working conditions in military organization using Chi-square test. The study of the difference between arithmetic means of some personal characteristics of the respondents, on the one hand, and their perception of satisfaction with working conditions in military organization, on the other hand, was performed using variance analysis. In order to determine the structure of satisfaction of mixed-gender units with living and working conditions in military organization, factor analysis has been used.

The assumption of the connection between the respondents' sex and their adaptability to working conditions in military organization was tested using the Chi-square test of independence of two categorical variables. The first categorical variable was *the respondents' sex*, and the second categorical variable was one of the 16 manifest variables of *working conditions in military organization*. To test the assumption about the difference in the degree of adaptability of the respondents to working conditions in military organization according to their *age* and *length of the service in the Armed Forces*, analysis of variance has been used. This difference is defined by assessing the variance between and within the groups obtained as quotients of the sum of squared deviations and the corresponding number of degrees of freedom, and then determining Fisher F-statistics (Tenjović, 2000).

The implementation of factor analysis has enabled all 16 working conditions (manifest variables) to be grouped into a smaller number of main (basic, latent) components (factors). The basis for the extraction (separation) of factors as valid representatives of the whole set of manifest variables (working conditions) is the interconnection (correlation) of the marks that the respondents used to express their assessment of the difficulty of their adaptability to the given conditions. When separating (extracting) factors, the method of main components (principal components) has been used. The number of significant factors has been defined by using the Kaiser-Guttman root one criterion according to which "we keep in the model as many common factors as there are characteristic roots of the sample correlation matrix that are larger than one" (the value of arithmetic mean of characteristic roots) (Kovačić, 1994, p. 221). The obtained factors have been rotated using "varimax" criteria.



## RESULTS

The percentage of the respondents' responses to the difficulty of working conditions in military organization is shown in Table 2. The severity of specific working conditions in military organization has been estimated using a five-point Likert-type scale, with the number '1' meaning 'rather easily' and the number '5' 'rather difficult' to adapt to working conditions in military organization.

**Table 2.** *Adaptability to Specific Working Conditions in the Military Profession*

Specific working conditions in military organization	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)
1. Strict subordination of relations	40.2	35.3	20.8	3.3	0.4
2. Obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment	48.6	38.0	11.7	1.5	0.2
3. Physical exertion at work	29.6	33.3	27.2	7.1	2.8
4. Unplanned overtime engagement in the workplace	9.9	23.4	32.9	25.4	8.4
5. Mandatory duty	24.5	38.9	24.1	7.9	4.6
6. Stressful situations at work	9.3	20.1	34.7	25.4	10.5
7. Work complexity	22.5	38.6	30.9	6.2	1.8
8. Multi-day separation from family due to exercise	13.2	22.1	37.3	21.4	6.0
9. Outdoor work in all weather conditions	15.9	28.7	32.5	16.3	6.6
10. Obligation to accept transfer as required by service	6.6	13.5	28.0	29.8	22.1
11. Engagement out of the workplace during emergencies	16.3	31.8	39.3	8.6	4.0
12. Separation from family for several months (peace operations)	13.0	22.3	32.9	20.8	11.0
13. Harmonization of family and professional obligations	11.7	30.0	36.2	15.9	6.2
14. Ratio of salary to work difficulty	3.1	7.5	27.6	35.1	26.7
15. Responsibility for the actions of subordinates	10.8	28.9	42.2	15.9	2.2
16. Risk of injury	13.9	34.2	38.4	9.7	3.8

*Note:* Rather easy (1); Easy (2); Neither easy nor difficult (3); Difficult (4); Rather difficult (5).

The average degree of adaptability of the respondents to specific working conditions in military organization, expressed by the arithmetic mean of the difficulty of adaptation to each of those 16, is summarized in Table 3. On the basis of the arithmetic mean, the answers of the respondents have been ranked, where the rank '1' means the most difficult, and the rank '16' the easiest adaptation to working conditions in military organization. The average values of the respondents' answers range from 3.748 (rank 1) to 1.669 (rank 16). The same table shows the magnitude of the standard deviation as a measure of the deviation of individual results (estimates) from the arithmetic mean.



**Table 3.** *The Average Degree of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization*

Specific working conditions in military organization	AS	SD	Rang
1. Strict subordination of relations	1.885	0.878	15
2. Obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment	1.669	0.759	16
3. Physical exertion at work	2.203	1.034	14
4. Unplanned overtime engagement in the workplace	2.989	1.106	4
5. Mandatory duty	2.294	1.066	12
6. Stressful situations at work	3.079	1.116	3
7. Work complexity	2.261	0.935	13
8. Multi-day separation from family due to exercise	2.848	1.087	6
9. Outdoor work in all weather conditions	2.691	1.122	9
10. Obligation to accept transfer as required by service	3.472	1.166	2
11. Engagement out of the workplace during emergencies	2.521	0.995	11
12. Separation from family for several months (peace operations)	2.945	1.180	5
13. Harmonization of family and professional obligations	2.748	1.055	7
14. Ratio of salary to work difficulty	3.748	1.030	1
15. Responsibility for the actions of subordinates	2.698	0.938	8
16. Risk of injury	2.552	0.973	10

Note: AM – arithmetic mean; SD – standard deviation; rank 1 indicates the most difficult, and rank 16 the easiest adaptation.

Since the subject of this research is the adaptability to working conditions in military organization, we have been primarily interested in checking the relationship between the sex of the respondents, the length of their service in the Armed Forces and age, on the one hand, and their adaptability to specific working conditions in military organization, on the other hand. The relationship between the sex of the respondents and the adaptability to working conditions has been defined using the Chi-square test, and the difference between age and length of service, on the one hand, and the assessment of adaptability conditions, on the other hand, has been defined using variance analysis.

Judging by the values of the Chi-square statistics and its significance for 16 pairs of categorical variables (the sex of the respondents and working conditions in military organization), which are shown in Table 4, it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation between three pairs of categorical variables, that is, between the sex of the respondents, on the one hand, and one of three working conditions in military organization, on the other hand: 'physical exertion at work' (Likelihood Ratio = 9.746, df = 4; p = .045); 'multi-day separation from family due to exercise' (Pearson Chi-Square = 13.613; df = 4; p = .009) and 'salary disproportionate to work difficulty and responsibility' (Pearson Chi-Square = 12.125; df = 4; p = .016).



**Table 4.** *The Sex of the Respondents and Assessment of Adaptability Conditions in Military Organization*

Specific working conditions in military organization	Results	Value	df	Asymp Sig.(2-sided)
1. Strict subordination of relations	Pearson Chi-Square	5.007	4	.287
	Likelihood Ratio	5.553	4	.235
	N of Valid Cases	453		
2. Obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment	Pearson Chi-Square	2.806	4	.591
	Likelihood Ratio	2.966	4	.564
	N of Valid Cases	453		
3. Physical exertion at work	Pearson Chi-Square	9.424	4	.051
	Likelihood Ratio	9.746	4	.045
	N of Valid Cases	453		
4. Overtime unplanned engagement in the workplace	Pearson Chi-Square	1.232	4	.873
	Likelihood Ratio	1.252	4	.869
	N of Valid Cases	453		
5. Mandatory duty	Pearson Chi-Square	1.480	4	.830
	Likelihood Ratio	1.468	4	.832
	N of Valid Cases	453		
6. Stressful situations at work	Pearson Chi-Square	2.712	4	.607
	Likelihood Ratio	2.714	4	.607
	N of Valid Cases	453		
7. Work complexity	Pearson Chi-Square	2.800	4	.592
	Likelihood Ratio	2.921	4	.571
	N of Valid Cases	453		
8. Multi-day separation from family due to exercise	Pearson Chi-Square	13.613	4	.009
	Likelihood Ratio	13.442	4	.009
	N of Valid Cases	453		
9. Outdoor work in all weather conditions	Pearson Chi-Square	7.545	4	.110
	Likelihood Ratio	7.495	4	.112
	N of Valid Cases	453		
10. Obligation to accept transfer as required by service	Pearson Chi-Square	7.462	4	.113
	Likelihood Ratio	7.564	4	.109
	N of Valid Cases	453		
11. Engagement out of the workplace during emergencies	Pearson Chi-Square	1.150	4	.886
	Likelihood Ratio	1.151	4	.886
	N of Valid Cases	453		
12. Separation from family for several months (peace operations)	Pearson Chi-Square	2.922	4	.571
	Likelihood Ratio	2.876	4	.579
	N of Valid Cases	453		
13. Harmonization of family and professional obligations	Pearson Chi-Square	7.148	4	.128
	Likelihood Ratio	7.228	4	.124
	N of Valid Cases	453		
14. Ratio of salary to work difficulty	Pearson Chi-Square	12.125	4	.016
	Likelihood Ratio	12.602	4	.013
	N of Valid Cases	453		
15. Responsibility for the actions of subordinates	Pearson Chi-Square	2.088	4	.720
	Likelihood Ratio	2.105	4	.716
	N of Valid Cases	453		
16. Risk of injury	Pearson Chi-Square	2.829	4	.587
	Likelihood Ratio	3.011	4	.556
	N of Valid Cases	453		

Note: Rather easy (1); Easy (2); Neither easy nor difficult (3); Difficult (4); Rather difficult (5).



When it comes to *the first pair* of categorical variables, i. e. half of the respondents and their perception of tolerating “great physical exertion”, the results of examining the relationship between these two variables, using the Chi-square test, presented in Table 5, show: over 33% of the male respondents point out that it is ‘rather easy’ and over 32% of them point out that it is ‘easy’ to tolerate great physical exertion, which is a total of almost 2/3 of the respondents. Less than 10% of men tolerate these difficulties ‘difficult’ (5.90%) and ‘rather difficult’ (3.61%). In contrast, a smaller percentage of the female population tolerates great physical exertion at work ‘rather easy’ (22.30%) and a slightly higher percentage ‘easy’ (35.14%). When it comes to indecisive respondents on this issue, there is a higher percentage of indecisive women (31.76%) than men (24.92%). Likelihood Ratio for testing the hypothesis of the independence of two categorical variables is 9.746 and for four degrees of freedom is statistically significant at the level of 0.045. However, the minimum expected count is 4.25, but this value (4.57) should be greater than 5. That is not the case here. This is a consequence of such grouping of data that one of the values (10%) is less than 5. The article did not regroup data, because it would require moves from a five-point scale to a three-point one. So, the conditions for the chi square are not met.

**Table 5.** *The relationship Between the Sex of the Respondents and Their Assessment of the Manner of Tolerating Great Physical Exertion (Crosstabulation)*

SEX	Great physical exertion					Total
	Rather easy (1.00)	Easy (2.00)	Neither easy nor difficult (3.00)	Difficult (4.00)	Rather difficult (5.00)	
Male	101/33.12%	99/32.46%	76/24.92%	18/5.90%	11/3.61%	305
Female	33/22.30%	52/35.14%	47/31.76%	14/9.46%	2/1.35%	148
Total	134/29.58%	151/33.33%	123/27.15%	32/7.06%	13/2.87%	453

Note: Pearson Chi-Square = 9.424 (a); df = 4; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .051; Likelihood Ratio = 9.746; df = 4; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .045; N of Valid Cases = 453; a1 cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.25.

The results of examining the relationship between *the second pair* of categorical variables defined as the sex of the respondents and the assessment of tolerance of ‘multi-day separation from family due to exercise’, presented in Table 6, show that almost 35% of the male respondents point out that it is “rather easy” and “easy” for them to tolerate separation from family (34.75%), while a slightly higher percentage of women tolerate this difficulty in the same way (36.49%). This result can be explained by the exceptional motivation of women to perform professional officer duties, especially at the beginning of their career. In contrast, a rather higher percentage of women tolerates separation from family as ‘difficult’ and ‘rather difficult’ (33.78%), while there is a lower percentage of men in these categories (24.27%). The value of Pearson coefficient of the Chi-square test on the correlation between the mentioned categorical variables for four degrees of freedom is 13.613 and is statistically significant at the level of 0.009. It can therefore be concluded that there is a correlation between the sex of the respondents and their perception of the way of tolerating separation from family due to exercise.



**Table 6.** *The relationship Between the Sex of the Respondents and Their Assessment of Tolerance due to Multi-Day Separation from Family (Crosstabulation)*

SEX	Multi-day separation from family due to exercise					Total
	Rather easy (1.00)	Easy (2.00)	Neither easy nor difficult (3.00)	Difficult (4.00)	Rather difficult (5.00)	
Male	36/11.80%	70/22.95%	125/40.98%	53/17.38%	21/6.89%	305
Female	24/16.22%	30/20.27%	44/29.73%	44/29.73%	6/4.05%	148
Total	60/13.25%	100/22.07%	169/37.31%	97/21.41%	27/5.96	453

Note: Pearson Chi-Square = 13.613(a); df = 4; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .009; Likelihood Ratio = 13.442; df = 4; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .009; N of Valid Cases = 453; all cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.82.

The statistical data on the relationship between *the third pair* of categorical variables, which is defined as the sex of the respondents and their assessment of whether 'salary is disproportionate to the difficulty of work they perform' in military organization, presented in Table 7, both sexes point out that this fact is 'difficult' and 'rather difficult' to tolerate, with this difficulty being more emphasized in men than in women (men - 63.61%, and women - 58.11%). Over 11% of men and about 9% of women find it 'rather easy' and 'easy' to tolerate this difficulty. It is interesting to emphasize that indecision on this issue is more present with women (33.11%) than with men (24.93%). The value of Pearson Chi-square test is 12.125 and for three degrees of freedom is statistically significant at the level of  $p = 0.016$ . Thus, we conclude that there is a correlation between the sex of the respondents and their perception of whether salary is proportionate to the difficulty of work they perform. However, the minimum expected count is 4.57, but this value (4.57) should be greater than 5. That is not the case here. This is a consequence of such grouping of data that one of the values (10%) is less than 5. The article did not regroup data, because it would require moves from a five-point scale to a three-point one. So, the conditions for the chi square are not met.

**Table 7.** *The relationship Between the Sex of the Respondents and Their Assessment of Whether Their Salary is Disproportionate to the Difficulty and Responsibility of Work They Perform (Crosstabulation)*

SEX	Salary disproportionate to the difficulty and responsibility of work					Total
	Rather easy (1.00)	Easy (2.00)	Neither easy nor difficult (3.00)	Difficult (4.00)	Rather difficult (5.00)	
Male	11/3.61%	24/7.87%	76/24.92%	99/32.46%	95/31.15%	305
Female	3/2.03%	10/6.76%	49/33.11%	60/40.54%	26/17.57%	148
Total	14/3.09	34/7.51	125/27.59%	159/35.10%	121/26.71%	453

Note: Pearson Chi-Square = 12.125(a); df = 4; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .016; Likelihood Ratio = 12.602; df = 4; Asymp. Sig. (2-sided) = .013; N of Valid Cases = 453; all cells (10.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 4.57.



The results of the analysis of variance did not confirm the validity of the assumption about the difference in the level of adaptability of the respondents to working conditions in military organization according to their age and time spent in military service, for any of the 16 working conditions. In other words, the analysis of variance showed that the differences between the respondents within the same age group (up to 30, from 31 to 40 or over 40), that is, the differences between the respondents within the same group with regard to the length of service in the Armed Forces (up to 5, from 6 to 15 or over 15 years) are greater than the differences between the mentioned groups. This means that the used statistical procedure did not provide evidence of the causal relationship between the mentioned characteristics of the respondents and their perception of the severity of working conditions in military organization.

In order to define the structure of the respondents' assessment of the adaptability to working conditions in military organization, *factor analysis* has been done. Implementing the Kaiser-Guttman criterion, using as relevant for further analysis those components, whose so-called characteristic roots are greater or equal to 1, four factors (main components) have been singled out, which explains 58.15% of the total variance of the results (Table 8).

**Table 8.** Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.88	36.73	36.73	5.88	36.73	36.73	2.70	16.86	16.86
2	1.36	8.48	45.20	1.36	8.48	45.20	2.43	15.20	32.06
3	1.05	6.59	51.79	1.05	6.59	51.79	2.22	13.87	45.92
4	1.02	6.36	58.15	1.02	6.36	58.15	1.96	12.23	58.15
5	.860	5.37	63.52						
6	.806	5.04	68.56						
7	.751	4.70	73.26						
8	.709	4.43	77.69						
9	.625	3.91	81.60						
10	.542	3.38	84.99						
11	.479	2.10	87.98						
12	.451	2.82	90.80						
13	.405	2.53	93.33						
14	.380	2.38	95.70						
15	.363	2.27	97.97						
16	.324	2.02	100.00						

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Table 9 shows the matrix of rotated components that speaks of 'closeness', i. e. the degree of 'matching' indicators (in this case, working conditions in military organization) with



each of four separate factors (main components). On the basis of this ‘closeness’ expressed by the degree of correlation, the nature of each factor is recognized, i. e. a part of the space of manifest variables that it best covers (represents).

**Table 9.** *Rotated Component Matrix(a)*

Working conditions in military organization	Component			
	1	2	3	4
1. Strict subordination of relations	.181	.148	.126	.830
2. Obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment	.054	.164	.031	.865
3. Physical exertion at work	.363	.341	.282	.405
4. Overtime unplanned engagement in the workplace	.241	.268	.627	.161
5. Mandatory duty	.327	.207	.378	.274
6. Stressful situations at work	.206	.533	.511	.087
7. Work complexity	.264	.672	.034	.188
8. Multi-day separation from family due to exercise	.635	.179	.337	.186
9. Outdoor work in all weather conditions	.545	.333	.231	.267
10. Obligation to accept transfer as required by service	.370	-.053	.588	.138
11. Engagement out of the workplace during emergencies	.680	.300	.068	.193
12. Separation from family for several months (peace operations)	.785	.050	.071	.022
13. Harmonization of family and professional obligations	.501	.320	.312	-.012
14. Ratio of salary to work difficulty	-.006	.115	.812	-.023
15. Responsibility for the actions of subordinates	.040	.773	.180	.099
16. Risk of injury	.292	.681	.109	.196

Note: Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis; Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization; Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

According to the mentioned criterion, the FIRST FACTOR consists of the following indicators: separation from family for several months (peacekeeping operations) (.785); engagement out of the workplace during emergencies (.680); multi-day separation from family due to exercise (.635); outdoor work in all weather conditions (.545); harmonization of family and professional obligations (.501); obligation to accept transfer as required by service (.370); physical exertion at work (.363) and mandatory duty (.327). Therefore, this factor, viewed as one of the main components of working conditions in military organization, could be defined as *fulfilling roles in the sphere of personal and professional military life*.

THE SECOND FACTOR is most closely related to the following indicators: responsibility for the actions of subordinates (.773); risk of injury (.681); work complexity (.672); stressful situations at work (.533); physical exertion at work (.341); outdoor work in all weather conditions (.333); harmonization of family and professional obligations (.320) and engagement out of the workplace during emergencies (.300). From the mentioned working conditions



in the military profession, related requirements arise in which *the complexity, responsibility and stress of the military profession* are recognized as a latent (basic) characteristic.

THE THIRD FACTOR is defined by the following indicators: the ratio of salary to work difficulty (.812); unplanned (*ad hoc*) overtime engagement in the workplace (.627); obligation to accept transfer as required by service (.588); stressful situations at work (.511); mandatory duty (.378); multi-day separation from family due to exercise (.337) and harmonization of family and professional obligations (.312). As a representative of the mentioned variables, this factor could be defined as *the assessment of the difficulty and responsibility of the military profession*.

THE FOURTH FACTOR is unequivocally defined by three indicators: obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment (.865); strict subordination of relations (.830) and great physical exertion (.405). On the basis of this classification, this factor can be defined as *respect of subordination of relations and overcoming physical exertion*.

On the basis of the presented results, it can be concluded that 16 indicators (items) that indicate the conditions of adaptability in military organization can be explained by four common factors. This means that the studied Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization includes a four-factor structure that can be used to measure the adaptability of individuals in mixed-gender formations to working conditions in military organization.

## DISCUSSION

Starting from the main characteristics of military organization which they belong to, the position of the respondents is quite understandable that they easily tolerate the following working conditions in military organization: 'obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment'; 'strict subordination of relations'; 'physical exertion at work'; 'mandatory duty' and 'work complexity'. Over a third of the respondents are indecisive ('neither easy nor difficult') on the issue of 'responsibility for the actions of subordinates'; 'engagement out of the workplace during emergencies'; 'present risk of injury'; 'multi-day separation from family due to exercise' and 'harmonization of family and professional obligations'. In contrast, they find it difficult to tolerate 'stressful situation at work'; 'unplanned (*ad hoc*) overtime engagement in the workplace'; 'ratio of salary disproportionate to difficulty and responsibilities of job' and 'obligation to accept transfer as required by service'.

In contrast to easily acceptable conditions of the service in a military uniform for the vast majority of the respondents, as the most difficult conditions to accept were: 'obligation to accept transfer as required by service', which is 'difficult' and 'rather difficult' acceptable option for 52% of the respondents and 'inadequate income', i. e. 'ratio of salary to work difficulty', which 62% of them perceive as an indisputably bad side of the military profession. The fact that these two conditions are in a leading position is not a great surprise if we consider the social position of the majority of the respondents. In such a situation, transfer to other garrison means additional economic exhaustion and the dilemma of whether to relocate family, which usually means the loss of a job for a spouse (if employed), or living separately from family, with all risks and challenges that such lifestyle brings.



At first glance, it seems surprising that for 31.8% of the respondents it would be 'difficult' or 'rather difficult' to accept 'separation from family for several months in order to participate in peace operations', when it is known that so far it has not been difficult to find enough volunteers for this form of engagement. However, one should bear in mind that the current deployment of the Serbian Armed Forces members in peacekeeping missions is small, so that the number of required volunteers was far less than the number of those for whom separation from family would not be a problem (13% of the respondents).

On the basis of the average values of the respondents' answers on the Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization, it can be concluded that the first five ranks, i.e. the most difficult adaptability to the conditions of military organization are the following indicators: 'ratio of salary to work difficulty'; 'obligation to accept transfer as required by service'; 'stressful situations at work'; 'overtime unplanned engagement in the workplace' and 'separation from family for several months due to participation in peacekeeping operations'. The last five ranks or the easiest adaptability to working conditions in military organization include the following indicators: 'mandatory duty'; 'work complexity'; 'physical exertion at work'; 'strict subordination of relations' and 'obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment'.

When it comes to *the Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization*, this research has studied the main psychometric characteristics on a sample of 453 members of mixed-gender units of the Armed Forces. The factor analysis procedure has resulted in four dimensions, i. e. subscales, which are defined as: *fulfilling roles in the sphere of family and professional military life; complexity, responsibility and stress in the military profession; respecting the difficulty and responsibility of the military profession, respecting the relations of subordination and overcoming physical exertion*. The reliability of the scale measured by Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient was 0.882.

The first subscale is defined by five items, the second and third by four, and the fifth by three items. The first subscale is mostly defined by the following items (indicators): 'separation from family for several months due to participation in peacekeeping operations'; 'engagement out of the workplace during emergencies'; 'multi-day separation from family due to exercise'; 'outdoor work in all weather conditions and harmonization of family and professional obligations'. The second subscale is most closely related to the following items: 'responsibility for the actions of subordinates'; 'risk of injury'; 'work complexity and stressful situations at work'. The third subscale is mostly defined by the following indicators: 'salary disproportionate to work difficulty and responsibility'; 'unplanned (*ad hoc*) overtime engagement in the workplace'; 'obligation to accept transfer as required by service and mandatory duty'. The fourth subscale is unequivocally defined by three indicators: 'strict subordination of relations'; 'obligation to respect a code of conduct and mutual treatment and physical exertion at work'. The obtained factors are consistent with certain dimensions of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Porfeli & Savickas, 2012; Maggiori et al., 2017; Gumerovna et al., 2021; Mirković et al., 2020) and the Job Adaptability Inventory - JAI (Pulakos et al., 2000; White et al., 2005).

The four dimensions of the Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization are in line with the four dimensions of the Career Adapt-Abilities Scale defined as Concern, Control, Curiosity and Trust (Savickas & Porfeli, 2012; Mirković et al., 2020). These dimensions also coincide with the seven dimensions of the eight-dimensional JAI



Questionnaire model (except for Demonstrating Cultural Adaptability) (Pulakos et al., 2000). The first subscale defined as *fulfilling roles in the sphere of family and professional military life* is partly in line with the three subscales of the eight-dimensional JAI Inventory (Pulakos et al., 2000) (Solving Problems Creatively; Dealing with Uncertain/Unpredictable Work Situations and Learning Work Tasks, Technologies, and Procedures). In the second subscale defined as *complexity, responsibility and stress in the military profession*, the contents of the indicators coincide with a subscale of JAI Inventory (Handling Stress at Work). The third subscale defined as *the evaluation of the difficulty and responsibility of the military profession* is partly in accordance with the first dimension of JAI Inventory (Handling Emergencies or Crisis Situations). The fourth subscale, defined as respecting the relations of subordination and overcoming physical exertion coincides with the two subscales of JAI Questionnaire (Demonstrating Interpersonal Adaptability and Demonstrating Physically Oriented Adaptability). In the nine-dimensional JAI Inventory model, the subscale defined as 'Adaptive Team Management' (White et al., 2005) is consistent with the following dimensions of the Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization: *fulfilling roles in the sphere of family and professional military life; complexity, responsibility and stress in the military profession; respecting the difficulty and responsibility of the military profession and respecting the relations of subordination and overcoming physical exertion.*

## CONCLUSION

The main objective of this research was to study the adaptability of the members of mixed-gender units and institutions of the Serbian Armed Forces to living and working conditions in military organization, and special objectives were aimed at defining main statistical indicators of adaptability to working conditions in military organizations, studying the influence of some personal and status characteristics of respondents on their perception of satisfaction with living and working conditions in military organization (sex, age and years of service) and defining the factor structure of the perception of working conditions in military organization. The research has been conducted on a suitable sample of mixed-gender units of the Serbian Armed Forces. The sample included 453 members of mixed-gender units of the Armed Forces, which, in addition to male officers, employ female officers who have graduated from the Military Academy. *The Scale of Adaptability to Working Conditions in Military Organization* of 16 items has been used to study the adaptability of individuals of mixed-gender units of the Armed Forces. The reliability of the scale measured by Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient is 0.882.

On the basis of the percentage of the respondents' answers, it can be concluded that they find it 'easy' to tolerate 'obligation to respect the prescribed code of conduct and mutual treatment' and 'strict subordination of relations', 'mandatory duty' and 'work complexity'. Over 1/3 of the respondents cannot decide when it comes to the difficulty of adaptation ('neither easy nor difficult') to the following living and working conditions in military organization: 'responsibility for the actions of subordinates'; 'engagement out of the workplace during emergencies'; 'present risk of injury'; 'multi-day separation from family due to exercise' and 'harmonization of family and professional obligations'. Equally 'difficult'



for them is 'stressful situation at work' and 'unplanned (*ad hoc*) overtime engagement in the workplace'. It is interesting to point out that they find 'rather difficult' that their 'salary is disproportionate to the difficulty and responsibility of a job' as well as the 'obligation to accept transfer as required by service'. Descriptive analysis of the difficulty of working conditions in military organization, which includes arithmetic mean, standard deviation and rank by difficulty of conditions, has shown that, according to the average values of answers, the greatest difficulty of working conditions in military organization is expressed in: 'salary disproportionate to the difficulty and responsibility of a job'; 'obligation to accept transfer as required by service'; 'stress at work'; 'unplanned (*ad hoc*) overtime engagement in the workplace' and 'separation from family for several months in the case of participation in peacekeeping operations'. The following conditions have the lowest rank in terms of the difficulty of working conditions in military organization: 'duty'; 'work complexity'; 'great physical exertion'; 'strict subordination of relations' and 'obligation to respect the prescribed code of conduct and mutual treatment'.

Judging by the values of Chi-square statistics and its significance for 16 pairs of categorical variables (the sex of the respondents and working conditions in military organization), it can be concluded that there is a statistically significant correlation between three pairs of categorical variables, that is, between the sex of the respondents, on the one hand, and one of three working conditions in military organization, on the other hand: 'physical exertion at work'; 'multi-day separation from family due to exercise' and 'salary disproportionate to the difficulty and responsibility of work'. When it comes to adaptability to living and working conditions in military organization, the analysis of variance did not determine the significance of differences between some categories of the respondents according to age and length of the service in the Armed Forces in any of 16 assessed working conditions in military organization.

In addition to descriptive analysis, Chi-square test and analysis of variance, 16 working conditions in military organization have been subjected to factor analysis. On the basis of the Kaiser-Guttman criterion, it has been determined that four factors have the magnitude of the characteristic root greater or equal to one. The total explained variance with these four factors is 58.15%. Using a rotated component matrix, the character of four isolated factors has been defined: *fulfilling roles in the sphere of family and professional military life; complexity, responsibility and stress in the military profession; respecting the difficulty and responsibility of the military profession, respecting the relations of subordination and overcoming physical exertion*. These factors practically have a common denominator with the factors of working conditions in other working environments that are close to military environment. Taken as a whole, the obtained results might have wider implications because they indicate the adaptation of a person to working environment, which is in some aspects similar to the military environment. This finding is consistent with the results of the career adaptability study.



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