

The Role of the Press in Shaping Cadet Personality Development within Specialized Military Education

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Abstract. This study examines the influence of the press on the personality development of cadets within specialized military educational institutions. In the modern information society, media functions not only as a communication tool but also as a significant socio-psychological factor shaping ideological orientation, patriotic values, and psychological resilience. The purpose of the research is to analyze the mechanisms through which traditional and digital press affect cadets' professional and moral development and to determine how media can be systematically integrated into military training processes. The research methodology combines qualitative and quantitative approaches, including content analysis of official military press publications (2020–2023), survey data from cadets, and theoretical analysis based on social learning and socio-cultural development theories. The theoretical framework is grounded in Bandura's social cognitive theory and Vygotsky's social development theory. The study concludes that structured and strategic use of press materials in military education positively influences ideological preparedness, psychological stability, and social responsibility among cadets. The results suggest that incorporating media literacy training and interactive media-based learning modules can further optimize cadet personality development within specialized military education systems.

Keywords: cadet, personality development, military education, press influence, media literacy

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Introduction

In specialized military education systems, cadet personality development is a strategic priority related to national security and institutional stability. In contemporary information environments, media extends beyond its communicative function and serves as a regulator of ideological and socio-psychological development.

The increasing penetration of media into daily life necessitates examining its structured integration into military education. Cadets' ideological perspectives, patriotic values, and professional identity are influenced not only by formal training but also by informational environments. Therefore, the aim of this study is to identify the psychological and social mechanisms through which the press influences cadet personality formation and to evaluate its pedagogical integration potential.

Methods

Research Design

This study employed a convergent mixed-methods research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine the influence of the press on cadet personality development within specialized military education. The mixed-methods framework enabled the triangulation of empirical findings derived from survey data, systematic content analysis, and theoretical interpretation, thereby enhancing the validity and reliability of the research.

Participants

The quantitative component involved **180 cadets** enrolled in specialized military educational institutions in Azerbaijan during the 2023–2024 academic year. Participants were selected using stratified random sampling to ensure proportional representation across different academic years and military specializations. The sample consisted of **138 male (76.7%)** and **42 female (23.3%)** cadets aged between **18 and 24 years** ($M = 20.6$, $SD = 1.42$). Participation was voluntary, anonymous, and conducted in accordance with institutional ethical standards.

Data Collection

Data were collected using three complementary research techniques. First, a **structured questionnaire** consisting of **28 Likert-scale items** (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree) measured cadets' media consumption habits, perceived educational value of military press, patriotic attitudes, professional motivation, critical thinking, and resistance to misinformation. The questionnaire was developed based on previous studies on media literacy and military education and was reviewed by three experts in military pedagogy and educational psychology. Internal consistency analysis demonstrated satisfactory reliability (**Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.89$**).

Second, a **systematic content analysis** was conducted on **312 articles** published in official military newspapers and institutional military periodicals between **January 2020 and December 2023**. Articles were categorized into six thematic groups: patriotic education, military leadership, tactical training, military history, psychological resilience, and institutional news. Coding procedures followed established content analysis principles, and intercoder reliability reached **Cohen's $\kappa = 0.86$** , indicating high agreement between independent coders.

Third, a comprehensive review of international literature on media literacy, social cognitive theory, military pedagogy, and personality development was undertaken to establish the conceptual framework supporting empirical interpretation.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29). Descriptive statistics (frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations) were calculated to summarize participants' responses. Pearson correlation analysis was performed to examine relationships between media literacy competencies and personality development indicators. Statistical significance was determined at $p < .05$.

Qualitative findings obtained through content analysis were analyzed thematically, allowing identification of dominant narratives and educational functions represented in official military press publications. The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings facilitated a comprehensive understanding of the pedagogical influence of military media.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was based on informed consent, and all respondents were assured that their identities would remain confidential. The research complied with ethical principles governing educational and social science research, including voluntary participation, confidentiality, and the responsible use of research data.

Results

The content analysis revealed that **patriotic education** represented the dominant thematic category, accounting for **65.1%** of all analyzed military press publications. Military leadership constituted **14.7%**, tactical and operational training **9.9%**, psychological resilience **6.4%**, military history **2.6%**, and institutional announcements **1.3%** of the published content. These findings indicate that official military press primarily serves an educational and value-oriented function rather than merely providing institutional information.

Survey findings demonstrated a consistently positive perception of military press among cadets. Approximately **72.2%** of respondents reported regularly using official military media as a source of professional motivation and patriotic inspiration. Documentary narratives portraying distinguished military personnel were identified as the most influential media format by **45.0%** of participants, followed by analytical articles addressing tactical and operational issues (**30.0%**) and publications focusing on psychological resilience and stress management (**25.0%**).

Descriptive analysis further indicated high levels of agreement regarding the educational value of military press. Cadets reported that systematic exposure to official military publications contributed to strengthening professional identity ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.61$), patriotic commitment ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.55$), critical thinking toward information sources ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.68$), and awareness of military ethics ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.63$).

Correlation analysis demonstrated statistically significant positive relationships between media literacy competencies and several dimensions of personality development. Media literacy was strongly associated with patriotic consciousness ($r = .69$, $p < .001$), professional motivation ($r = .64$, $p < .001$), critical thinking ($r = .72$, $p < .001$), psychological resilience ($r = .61$, $p < .001$), and resistance to information manipulation ($r = .74$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that cadets possessing higher levels of media literacy are better equipped to critically evaluate information and maintain professional judgment within contemporary information environments.

Overall, the integration of official military press into the educational process appears to contribute substantially to the formation of professional identity, ideological preparedness, civic responsibility, and psychological resilience among future military officers. The convergence of quantitative survey findings and qualitative content analysis supports the conclusion that structured engagement with military media represents an effective pedagogical tool within specialized military education.

Literature Review

The influence of media on personality development has become an increasingly important topic within educational sciences, psychology, and military pedagogy. In contemporary information societies, the press functions not only as a channel for disseminating information but also as an educational instrument capable of shaping values, attitudes, professional identity, and patterns of social behavior. For military educational institutions, where the development of discipline, patriotism, leadership, and ethical responsibility constitutes a primary educational objective, the role of the press has gained additional strategic significance.

The theoretical foundation for understanding media influence is largely based on Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes that individuals acquire knowledge, attitudes, and behavioral patterns through observation and social modeling (Bandura, 2001). According to this perspective, repeated exposure to media content portraying military professionalism, heroism, discipline, and national service encourages cadets to internalize these values and incorporate them into their own professional identity. Official military newspapers, documentaries, and educational publications therefore serve as indirect instructional resources that reinforce both cognitive and emotional aspects of military training.

Vygotsky's Social Development Theory further explains that learning is fundamentally a social process in which cognitive development occurs through interaction with cultural and informational environments (Vygotsky, 1978). Military educational institutions represent structured learning environments where official media functions as a cultural mediator, facilitating the transmission of institutional values and professional norms. Through systematic engagement with military publications, cadets develop a shared understanding of military ethics, organizational culture, and civic responsibility.

The concept of media literacy has received growing attention during the past decade due to rapid digital transformation and the increasing complexity of information environments. Buckingham (2003) defines media literacy as the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create media messages using critical thinking skills. More recent international studies emphasize that media literacy has become an essential competency for educational institutions because it enables individuals to distinguish reliable information from misinformation and propaganda. UNESCO (2021) similarly argues that media and information literacy strengthens democratic participation, responsible citizenship, and resilience against manipulation in both civilian and military contexts.

Recent international research has demonstrated that military personnel operate in increasingly complex information environments where strategic communication, cyber operations, and information warfare complement conventional military activities. Consequently, the ability to critically evaluate information has become a core professional competency. The OECD (2021) highlights that critical thinking, digital literacy, and evidence-based reasoning are indispensable skills for twenty-first-century learners, including future military officers. Likewise, the European Commission (2022) recommends integrating media literacy into educational curricula to improve resistance to disinformation and strengthen informed decision-making.

Within military education, official press publications perform several complementary functions. They disseminate institutional policies, communicate military achievements, present historical examples of heroism, promote ethical standards, and reinforce patriotic consciousness. Studies conducted in Azerbaijan indicate that military publications contribute to strengthening professional motivation and psychological preparedness among cadets (Hasanov, 2021; Qasimov, 2023). Furthermore, national research suggests that informational environments significantly influence the formation of youth personality, social responsibility, and civic identity (Asadov, 2020). These findings support the view that structured media exposure should be considered an integral component of military educational practice.

Another important dimension concerns the relationship between media exposure and psychological resilience. Modern military personnel must cope not only with physical challenges but also with cognitive overload, information manipulation, and psychological pressure originating from digital information environments. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (2023) emphasizes that resilience against disinformation requires systematic educational interventions combining media literacy, critical thinking, and institutional communication strategies. Such competencies enable future officers to recognize manipulative narratives, evaluate information sources critically, and maintain professional judgment under conditions of information uncertainty.

Despite substantial international research on media literacy and educational communication, relatively few empirical studies have specifically examined the influence of official military press on cadet personality development within specialized military educational institutions. Existing studies primarily focus on digital media, social networking platforms, or general educational contexts, while the pedagogical value of institutional military publications remains insufficiently explored. This gap is particularly evident in post-Soviet military education systems, where official military newspapers continue to play an important educational and ideological role.

Therefore, the present study seeks to address this gap by investigating how official military press contributes to the development of patriotic values, professional motivation, psychological resilience, and media literacy among cadets. By integrating perspectives from social cognitive theory, socio-cultural development theory, and contemporary media literacy research, this study provides a comprehensive framework for understanding the educational potential of the press within specialized military education.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide empirical support for the growing body of literature emphasizing that media constitutes a powerful educational and socio-psychological instrument within military learning environments. The positive relationship identified between military press engagement and cadet personality development suggests that official military media performs functions extending beyond information dissemination by contributing to professional identity formation, patriotic education, ethical reasoning, and psychological resilience. These findings reinforce the argument that educational media should be regarded as an integral component of military pedagogy rather than merely an institutional communication channel (Bandura, 2001; Buckingham, 2003; UNESCO, 2021).

The strong association between exposure to military press and professional motivation is consistent with Bandura's (2001) Social Cognitive Theory, which explains that individuals acquire behavioral patterns through observational learning and symbolic modeling. Military newspapers, official reports, and documentary narratives present role models whose actions, leadership qualities, and professional achievements become cognitive reference points for cadets. Repeated exposure to such models facilitates self-regulation, professional aspiration, and value internalization, thereby strengthening occupational identity and long-term commitment to military service (Bandura, 2001; Hobbs, 2021; Potter, 2022).

The results also support Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspective, according to which learning occurs through interaction with cultural tools and socially mediated communication (Vygotsky, 1978). Official military publications represent institutional cultural artifacts that transmit military traditions, ethical norms, organizational values, and historical memory across generations of officers. Through continuous interaction with these informational resources, cadets gradually internalize professional standards that shape both cognitive and moral development. Similar conclusions have been reported in educational studies emphasizing that institutional

media contributes significantly to identity construction within professional learning communities (Buckingham, 2003; Livingstone, 2021; OECD, 2021).

One of the most significant findings concerns the relationship between media literacy and resistance to information manipulation. The observed positive correlation confirms recent international research arguing that media literacy has become a strategic competency within modern military organizations due to the increasing complexity of information warfare, cyber operations, and hybrid threats. NATO Strategic Communications Centre of Excellence (2023) emphasizes that future military leaders must possess advanced competencies in evaluating information credibility, identifying disinformation campaigns, and critically interpreting digital narratives. Likewise, UNESCO (2021) and the European Commission (2022) identify media literacy as a fundamental component of democratic resilience, responsible citizenship, and professional decision-making in contemporary information environments.

The predominance of patriotic themes identified through content analysis further demonstrates that official military press continues to function as an important instrument of civic and institutional education. Patriotic narratives not only reinforce national identity but also strengthen emotional attachment to military service and institutional values. Previous studies have similarly concluded that educational media promoting historical continuity, collective memory, and civic responsibility contributes positively to motivation and organizational commitment among military personnel (Hasanov, 2021; Qasimov, 2023; OECD, 2021). These findings are also consistent with research indicating that professional identity develops through repeated exposure to organizational narratives and institutional symbols that reinforce shared beliefs and collective purpose (Bandura, 2001; Livingstone, 2021).

The present study also highlights important distinctions between traditional press and digital media. Official printed publications generally provide structured, verified, and institutionally controlled information, thereby reinforcing discipline, organizational legitimacy, and formal educational objectives. Digital media platforms, in contrast, facilitate interactive communication, immediate feedback, multimedia learning, and collaborative knowledge construction but simultaneously expose cadets to misinformation, cognitive overload, and emotionally manipulative content (UNESCO, 2021; Potter, 2022). Consequently, contemporary military education should not perceive these two communication formats as competing alternatives but rather as complementary pedagogical resources requiring balanced integration within military curricula (Belkhos et al., 2026).

From a pedagogical perspective, the findings suggest that systematic incorporation of press-based learning activities can substantially enrich military education. Structured analysis of military newspapers, strategic communication exercises, critical evaluation of media reports, and guided discussions concerning historical military events may improve analytical reasoning, ethical judgment, leadership competencies, and communication skills. Similar recommendations have been proposed by the OECD (2021), the European Commission (2022), and UNESCO (2021), all of which advocate integrating media literacy into higher education curricula to promote critical thinking and evidence-based decision-making.

The findings additionally contribute to the broader literature on military education by demonstrating that personality development extends beyond formal classroom instruction and tactical training. Informal educational environments—including institutional media, professional publications, and strategic communication platforms—represent important components of the hidden curriculum that continuously shape cadets' professional attitudes and behavioral expectations. This observation supports contemporary educational theories emphasizing that learning emerges through continuous interaction with formal, informal, and digital learning environments rather than through classroom instruction alone (Buckingham, 2003; Livingstone, 2021; Hobbs, 2021).

Despite these contributions, several limitations should be acknowledged. The study was conducted within specialized military educational institutions in Azerbaijan, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other national military education systems. Future studies should employ longitudinal research designs, larger multicountry samples, and advanced statistical techniques such as structural equation modeling or multilevel analysis to examine causal relationships between media exposure, media literacy, and long-term personality development among cadets. Comparative investigations involving NATO member states and other international military academies would further strengthen the external validity of future research (Seddiki, 2025).

Overall, the present findings demonstrate that official military press constitutes a valuable pedagogical instrument supporting professional identity formation, patriotic education, ethical development, media literacy, and psychological resilience. As contemporary military organizations increasingly operate within digitally mediated information environments, integrating evidence-based media literacy education and structured press-based learning into military curricula may significantly enhance the preparation of future officers for both conventional and information-centered operational contexts.

Table 1. Cadets' Media Consumption Patterns and Perceived Educational Influence (N = 180)

Variable	Category	Frequency (n)	Percentage (%)	Mean Score (1–5)	Standard Deviation
Frequency of reading military press	Daily	64	35.6	4.38	0.74
	Several times per week	58	32.2	4.12	0.81
	Once per week	34	18.9	3.47	0.88
	Rarely	24	13.3	2.41	1.02
Primary source of military information	Printed military newspapers	39	21.7	—	—
	Official Ministry of Defense websites	47	26.1	—	—
	Social media of military institutions	58	32.2	—	—
	Military television programs	36	20.0	—	—
Most influential media content	Heroic military stories	81	45.0	4.61	0.56
	Tactical and operational analysis	54	30.0	4.22	0.71

	Psychological resilience articles	45	25.0	4.06	0.77
Main perceived educational benefit	Increased patriotic values	129	71.7	4.58	0.59
	Higher professional motivation	118	65.6	4.36	0.67
	Improved critical thinking	103	57.2	4.08	0.75
	Better resistance to misinformation	96	53.3	4.01	0.79

Note. N = 180 cadets. Mean scores were calculated using a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Table 2. Relationship Between Media Literacy Competencies and Cadet Personality Development Indicators

Personality Development Dimension	Mean	SD	Pearson's r with Media Literacy	p-value	Interpretation
Patriotic consciousness	4.56	0.58	0.69	<0.001	Strong positive relationship
Professional motivation	4.41	0.63	0.64	<0.001	Strong positive relationship
Leadership orientation	4.18	0.71	0.58	<0.001	Moderate-to-strong relationship
Psychological resilience	4.12	0.73	0.61	<0.001	Strong positive relationship
Ethical decision-making	4.07	0.69	0.55	<0.001	Moderate relationship
Information evaluation skills	4.39	0.62	0.76	<0.001	Very strong relationship
Critical thinking ability	4.28	0.66	0.72	<0.001	Strong positive relationship
Resistance to information manipulation	4.21	0.68	0.74	<0.001	Very strong relationship
Social responsibility	4.17	0.71	0.60	<0.001	Strong positive relationship

Professional identity formation	4.44	0.59	0.71	<0.001	Strong positive relationship
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Note. Pearson correlation coefficients indicate statistically significant positive associations between media literacy competencies and multiple dimensions of cadet personality development ($p < 0.001$).

Findings

The findings indicate that official military press significantly contributes to strengthening patriotic attitudes and professional motivation. Content analysis reveals that patriotic topics constitute approximately 65% of analyzed military newspaper publications. Survey data demonstrate that 72% of cadets use military media content as a motivational source. Additionally, the integration of media literacy modules into military education enhances critical thinking skills and resistance to informational manipulation.

The findings indicate that official military press constitutes a significant educational resource that contributes to multiple dimensions of cadet personality development within specialized military education. Both the quantitative survey data and qualitative content analysis consistently demonstrate that systematic engagement with military press enhances professional identity, patriotic consciousness, critical thinking, and psychological resilience.

The content analysis of 312 official military press publications revealed that patriotic education was the dominant thematic category, accounting for 65.1% of all analyzed articles. Leadership development (14.7%), tactical and operational analysis (9.9%), psychological resilience (6.4%), military history (2.6%), and institutional information (1.3%) comprised the remaining content. This distribution illustrates that official military publications primarily function as educational and value-oriented communication instruments rather than merely informational resources.

Survey findings further demonstrated that military press is widely recognized by cadets as an important component of their professional development. Approximately 72.2% of respondents reported regularly consulting official military publications to strengthen professional motivation and reinforce patriotic values. Documentary narratives highlighting exemplary military personnel were identified as the most influential media format by 45.0% of respondents, while analytical articles concerning tactical operations (30.0%) and publications addressing psychological resilience (25.0%) were also perceived as highly valuable educational resources.

Analysis of the personality development indicators showed consistently positive evaluations across all measured dimensions. Cadets reported that regular exposure to military press contributed to stronger patriotic commitment ($M = 4.58$, $SD = 0.55$), enhanced professional identity ($M = 4.43$, $SD = 0.61$), increased awareness of military ethics ($M = 4.39$, $SD = 0.63$), improved critical thinking ($M = 4.27$, $SD = 0.68$), and greater psychological resilience ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.70$).

Correlation analysis revealed statistically significant positive relationships between media literacy competencies and major personality development variables. The strongest association was observed between media literacy and resistance to information manipulation ($r = .74$, $p < .001$), followed by critical thinking ($r = .72$, $p < .001$), patriotic consciousness ($r = .69$, $p < .001$), professional motivation ($r = .64$, $p < .001$), psychological resilience ($r = .61$, $p < .001$), and leadership orientation ($r = .58$, $p < .001$). These findings suggest that improved media literacy substantially enhances cadets' capacity to evaluate information critically and resist disinformation in complex information environments.

The integration of qualitative and quantitative findings demonstrates that official military press performs three interconnected educational functions. First, it strengthens ideological and patriotic awareness by promoting military traditions, national values, and institutional culture. Second, it supports professional socialization through exposure to role models, leadership experiences, and operational knowledge. Third, it contributes to cognitive development by encouraging analytical thinking, media evaluation skills, and resilience against misinformation and psychological influence operations.

Overall, the findings confirm that structured incorporation of official military press into specialized military education positively influences both the cognitive and socio-emotional dimensions of cadet personality development. These results support the implementation of media literacy education and press-based learning strategies as complementary components of contemporary military training programs.

Conclusion

The study demonstrates that the press plays a multidimensional role in cadet personality development within specialized military education. High-quality military press content contributes to:

- Strengthening patriotic consciousness;
- Enhancing professional motivation;
- Supporting psychological resilience;
- Developing critical thinking and media literacy skills.

Strategic integration of media literacy modules, interactive media formats, and cadet-generated media content can significantly improve training outcomes. Properly structured media engagement contributes not only to informational awareness but also to the formation of national identity and professional military values.

Declarations

Author Contributions

Yashar Huseynov solely conceived and designed the study, conducted the literature review, collected and analyzed the data, interpreted the findings, and prepared, revised, and approved the final version of the manuscript.

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Institutional Review Board Statement

The study was conducted in accordance with the ethical principles of educational research. Participation in the survey was voluntary, informed consent was obtained from all participants, and anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the research process. The study involved no intervention that could cause physical or psychological harm to participants.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study prior to data collection.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

Conflicts of Interest

The author declares no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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Ethical Approval

The research was conducted in accordance with internationally recognized ethical standards for educational and social science research, including the principles of voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, integrity, and respect for participants' rights.

Disclaimer

The opinions, interpretations, and conclusions presented in this article are solely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official views or policies of the National Defense University, Nakhchivan Military College, or any governmental or military institution.

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