

THE GENDER EQUALITY PERSPECTIVE AND ITS CONTRIBUTION TO THE SUSTAINABILITY OF HUMAN RESOURCE IN THE MILITARY ORGANIZATION, IN THE CONTEXT OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract: *This article focused on offering a preliminary view on the most important areas in which gender equality perspective, one of the sustainable development goals, can contribute to the sustainability of human resource in the military organization and the possible effects. First, the article investigated, through a literature review approach, the conceptual dimensions of defense human resource sustainability, proposing a conceptual model which could be applied by military decision-makers to enhance the efficiency of human resource management and to contribute to the sustainability of military organization, in the context of sustainable development. Second, the article explored relevant documents, to identify the military approach to gendered issues, revealing some commonalities with the subsequent targets of the sustainable development goals and highlighting the emergence of a new military capability, represented by women's empowerment. Finally, the proposed sustainability model and the military gender equality perspective represented a framework for identifying the contribution gender equality perspective could have to the sustainability of defense human resource. In this respect, recent statistics and the analysis of some specific on-line content offered valuable information on the practical benefits of the gender equality perspective. To conclude, this study highlights the need that the military human resource management adapt its policies, to ensure a positive contribution of the gender perspective to the permanent and functional availability of its human resource.*

Keywords: *gender equality; sustainability; SDGs; defense; human resource; model.*

Introduction

The sustainable development (SD) debate is ample and, so far, attracted many researchers, as it tackles serious problems the current generation is called to solve, to ensure the followers benefit from the same pool of resources. Taking into account the complexity and diversity of this problematic, a holistic approach is requested, which should involve the entire spectrum of stakeholders. Consequently, although the military domain belongs to the public sector and has a minor contribution to the process of value creation, the core of the economic dynamics, its role in implementing the sustainable development goals (SDGs) is not sufficiently explored. Furthermore, the same situation appears when it comes to the way the military management can exploit the context of sustainable development, to find valuable solutions to problems related to defense resources scarcity.

To partially contribute to this endeavour, this article is focused on gender perspective, a problematic that is common to SD and military management, in order to find solutions for a more efficient defense human resource management (DHRM). Thus, this preliminary research is oriented toward the following objectives: creating a model that offers a possible interpretation of the concept represented by the sustainability of defense human resource (DHR) in the context of sustainable development; mapping the SD requests for gender equality; and applying the military lens, to identify the contribution the gender equality could have in the efficient implementation of the proposed sustainability model. Consequently, the article has a tri-dimensional structure, each section being dedicated to accomplishing the objectives mentioned above.

In terms of methodology, the contribution of gender equality perspective to the sustainability of DHR was revealed through a qualitative research, based mainly on the

critical analysis of primary and secondary relevant documents, issued by specialist researchers from the social and economic fields. Moreover, specific policies and recent studies conducted by multinational organizations like United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization and other prestigious institutions were reviewed, for a multidisciplinary approach of the investigated problematic. Additionally, some relevant content was analyzed and integrated in this research.

The concept of defense human resources sustainability, in the context of sustainable development

Sustainability represents a complex and highly debated concept, used mostly with the meaning of durability or long-term availability, especially when it comes to resources. Recently, its usage became commonly associated with sustainable development. Nevertheless, both concepts encompass multiple dimensions and when used together, this association can raise a series of detailed perspectives, as resulted from the reviewed literature.

First of all, it is important to mention the fact that sustainable development (SD) has as a main objective the responsible usage of resources, so that they be available in the future (United Nations 1987, 16). To make this possible, SD appeared as a relatively new form of economic development, a superior one, that takes into consideration not only the economic criterion, but also the ones related to society, environment (United Nations 2002) and modern technology or institutions (Munasinghe 2009, 35). A more complete definition, that also sets the background for this scientific research, refers to “protecting and conserving the planet’s natural environment and promoting social equity and a degree of economic equality within and between nations” (Blewitt 2018, 20). As one can easily notice, the idea of equality stands at the core of this multidimensional concept that describes, through its main components, a complex and dynamic process (Blewitt 2018, 37-72).

In direct connection with SD, sustainability enjoys a large spectrum of interpretations, like: concept and process, final goal of SD process, condition (Blewitt 2018, 1-75) or even science (Kates, Robert W. et al. 2001, 641-642). When it comes to resources in general, sustainability is associated with the concept of “sustainable resource use”, which describes the goal of maintaining the same level of renewable resources (Pezzey 1992, xi). What sustainable development and sustainability have in common is the four pillars, namely: economic, social, environmental and institutional, already mentioned in the part dedicated to the former concept. From the four components, in this article, I will focus on the second one, because I believe it is more appropriate to the subject represented by HR, without excluding its connections with the other three components, because the sustainability approach should be an integrative one.

From the HR perspective, my opinion is that an organization is constantly facing a process of renewal, dealing with different situations when some new employees enter the scene, others leave or the remaining ones upgrade their working skills and knowledge base, to be able to respond to the dynamic of demands. With regard to HR sustainability, the reviewed literature highlighted several interpretations. One of these treats HR sustainability as “the human dimension of social sustainability related to work” (Zink 2014, 35). Another one considers HR sustainability as a “dynamic state of human resources regeneration and growth” which takes into consideration various inputs from different actors (Guerci, Shani (Rami) and Solari 2014, 207). Nevertheless, a more detailed understanding could be provided by a model proposed in 2009, which takes into account the internal and external factors which enhance the HR sustainability, both at organization and employee level (Ehnert 2009, 228). The model, which encompasses three main dimensions (factors of influence, objectives and

activities), represents, from HR sustainability perspective, a real guide to organizations that follow the path to sustainability, in general.

Although the model was elaborated with a view on corporate organizations, my opinion is that it could also have an applicability in the military domain, with several modifications. For example, the military organization faces the same internal and external drivers specific to HR. Thus, it is affected by the demographic evolution, by the results obtained in the education systems and the level of employment, while targeting a high level of efficiency when managing defense HR. At the same time, the specificity of military organization requires, in my view, a greater amount of effort and dedication to the military profession. To these, I could also add the fact that military employees have to renounce at various rights, while asked to give their lives for the country. In this context, the objective of obtaining sustainability of defense HR could require a bigger effort from the military management.

Analyzing the second dimension of the model, which refers to “overall sustainability objectives” that are aligned with HR-related sustainability ones (Ehnert 2009, 228), I depicted the idea that first of all, the military organization should develop a sustainability strategy, with sustainability objectives deriving from it. Then, the sustainability objectives specific to HR should be developed to tackle essential problems faced by this domain. Generally speaking, these problems are the same for corporate and military organizations, but, once again, the ones in the military area present several particularities.

In terms of similarities, as companies want to obtain profit and to retain this performance over the years, the military organization could set some HR sustainability objectives that target obtaining/maintaining the highest level of fighting power on the long term. From my perspective, this is not an easy task. Starting from the components of fighting power, namely: moral, conceptual, and physical one (NATO Standardization Office 2017, 1-16, 1-17), it becomes obvious that each of these elements require a complexity of subsidiary debates. However, the HR component is omnipresent in each of the mentioned elements. This is the reason why it should be paid special attention, in terms of understanding the legitimacy of military leaders’ actions, trusting the comrades, creating cohesion, gaining adequate training and knowledge and experiencing an improved quality of life, so that the level of motivation be sufficiently high and allow mission accomplishment. Additionally, the military employees have to cope with obtaining the civilian environment support, either when it comes to military operations, or when attracting the right level of funds, in a complex context when armed conflicts, pandemics, environmental problems and economic crises could raise the contradictory need for both military organizations and resilient society.

All these considered, it can be understood that defense HR sustainability objectives consist of mainly two parts: attracting and retaining activities, the former being dependent on the image the military organization displays in society and on recruits’ desire to defend own country, while the latest encompassing a lot more elements (continuous training, career, medical services, logistic and financial support, well-being, etc.). Taking into account that military HR is exposed to injuries or death in conflict situations, regeneration is the third main factor that contributes to the sustainability of defense HR, aspect which is not covered by the mentioned HR sustainability model.

Another difference is that the corporate model provides some activities that facilitate sustainability of HR (Ehnert 2009, 228), which are not fully applicable, in my opinion, to the military organization. For example: global mobility (excepting periodic missions accomplished in multinational environment), occupational safety (the case of combat missions or other activities that imply a high level of risk), work-place quality (sometimes the operational environment does not offer the best life conditions for military), work-life balance (there are situations when personal life comes on the second place, while missions are more

important). Nevertheless, in my opinion, these aspects, should be maximized as much as possible for reaching defense HR sustainability.

Apart from the analyzed model, the reviewed literature highlighted several concepts that complete the sphere of DHR-sustainability. From my perspective, the following find applicability in the military organization: human sustainability, which aims at preventing stress and burnout (Kira and Lifvergren 2014, 65), work-system sustainability, that ensures compliance with all actors affected by the system (Kira and Lifvergren 2014, 66), sustainable work, performed by employees who maximize their knowledge to accomplish the objectives of the organization (Kira and Lifvergren 2014, 71), decent work, a broad concept which implies aspects like cooperation, dialog, improved working conditions, long term benefits for the organization (Hirsig, Nathalie et al. 2014, 130, 141) and equality of treatment and non-discrimination (Hirsig, Nathalie et al. 2014, 146), the last one being closer to the subject of the current research. There are also views that associate HR sustainability with the attitude that employers have towards the objectives of the organization, most of them stressing on four qualities, like: vitality, proactivity (Dorenbosch 2014, 156, 168), identification with organization (Kira and Lifvergren 2014, 69,70) and responsibility (Sarma, Ekta; Rao, Madasu Bhaskara 2020, 41). Nevertheless, specialists consider that HR management (HRM) needs to focus not only on the contribution of employees to organizational objectives, but also on the management's avoidance of those measures which cause loyalty and efficiency reduction (Sarma, Ekta; Rao, Madasu Bhaskara 2020, 38).

At the same time, the permanence of the military HR availability could be the result of management practices that avoid a high level of stress for the subordinates, thing that could be very demanding in the military sphere. That is why, from my perspective, the military HRM should focus on finding the balance between tasks equally assigned to all employees (no matter the gender, avoiding attrition of a certain part, formed not only by individuals which are considered most capable in an area of expertise), their recurrence, the level of risk and the means to encourage and motivate people to be creative in finding innovative solutions that are not imposed by the leadership.

It is this balance that facilitates, in my opinion, the development of the “psychological contract”, concept related to the way the employee and the employer understand their obligations and cooperate to accomplish missions (Susomrith 2020, 58). At this point, I would mention the importance of a real and complete presentation of future obligations, right from the steps related to military career promotion and recruitment. For example, after passing all the admission steps (medical, physical, psychological etc.) and promising to respect the oath of defending their country with the price of their lives, the military employees sign contracts that should be very detailed in terms of rights and obligations for the both sides, so that everybody become aware of the future expectations. These conditions assured, the so called “psychological contract” can be signed daily, the open communication and cooperation between military employer and employees being valuable for the retention in the military organization.

In strong connection with this gratifying experience, the reviewed literature brings into attention two additional aspects that need to be considered. The former, related to half of the population, signals the need that women, in general, have a sustainable career (Singh and Vanka 2020, 88). This concept is a multidimensional one, encompassing several ideal conditions that are difficult to be met, in my opinion, like: balance between family life and career development, the capacity to adapt to changes, financial stability and lifelong education (Singh and Vanka 2020, 96). Taking into consideration that military women enter a sphere dominated by men, it is important that DHRM identify ways to make them remain in this organization and actively contribute to its objectives. This approach is vital in the actual

context, strongly characterized by population ageing, decline in the available work-force and women’s poor representation in the managerial positions (Singh and Vanka 2020, 87).

From this perspective, researchers have shown that with respect to women’s sustainable career, the employer’s ability to integrate the family dimension is crucial for retaining this HR category into organization (Singh and Vanka 2020, 99). As for the military organization in particular, I believe this request could generate several conflicts, one example being the attitude and biases the male military comrades or chiefs, which do not form a family with a military woman, could express at some point. Thus, it is not a wonder specialists sustain the idea that military professional women follow different career paths, which provide the work-family equilibrium (Singh and Vanka 2020, 101). Nevertheless, in the case military women embrace such an idea, further research is needed to identify ways this approach can be operationalized in the military organization.

The later dimension which favors a positive experience and, as a result, the retention of HR in any organization is represented by emotional intelligence (EI). Being a broad concept, the HRM literature associates EI with the main steps related to HR availability for an organization: selection and recruitment, tasks accomplishment, training and development, and reward (compensation) (Odame, Pandey and Pathak 2020, 281). Generally speaking, the sustainability of HR is perceived as a result of positive emotions along the mentioned steps, which favor an easier interaction among employees and between employer and employees, and make them imply personal resources to support organizational objectives (Odame, Pandey and Pathak 2020, 280). Associated with actors internal or external to the organization, these positive perceptions determine the employee to work, because this is the reason they are recruited.

With regard to tasks accomplishments, training and compensation, the military organization presents another specificity, in my opinion. Thus, compensation, expressed in terms of material incentives or promotion, should come only if the assigned tasks and the training requests were completed. But going back to the conflict situation, the emotional intelligent soldiers are the ones that can act without additional material or financial resources, or even if they do not have any of these. This is the common result of their leaders’ and their own EI, which allows them to shape their motivation.

After comprehensively analyzing the aspects presented so far, I developed the conceptual model of DHR sustainability, as depicted in the following figure:

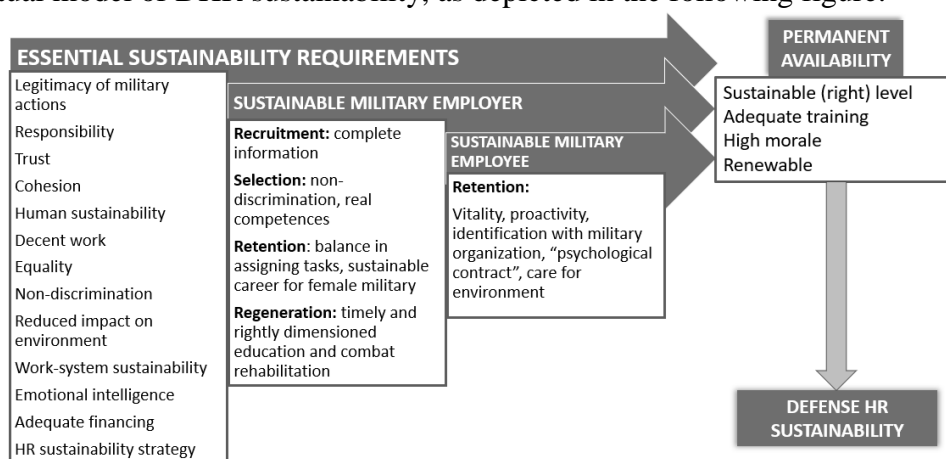


Figure no. 1. The Conceptual Model for Defense Human Resource Sustainability
(Source: Author)

The second important issue for this scientific research is represented by understanding the specificity of military gender equality perspective in the SD context, in order to connect it with the aspects related to defense HR sustainability, analyzed so far.

The military gender equality perspective in the context of sustainable development

The achievement of “gender equality and women and girls’ empowerment” represents the fifth goal of the SD, intended to be obtained through nine targets oriented toward increasing women’s quality of life (Nations n.d., 22). In comparison with most of the targets established for the other sixteen SDGs, the targets specific to SDG no. 5 do not specify a deadline for accomplishment, which shows that this problem is a complex one. However, the United Nations, as initiator, assumed the 2030 year as a broad deadline for accomplishing all SDGs, including the one which refers to gender equality and women’s empowerment (Nations n.d., 6).

Starting from the fact that SDG no. 5 is not important only in itself, but has a direct contribution to other SDGs accomplishment (Nations n.d., 10), it can be generally accepted that an organization cannot become sustainable in the right sense, if this goal and assigned targets are not met. This approach is highly sustained by the United Nations, organization which envisaged the need that women, representing half of the planet population be efficiently utilised to support SD, as a precondition of attaining the full potential of human resources (Nations n.d., 20). Thus, ideas referring to socially inclusive policies, economic empowerment of women and sport as an enabler (Nations n.d., 7-13), are highlighted in connection to women’s empowerment, as preconditions of SD.

In fact, the gender equality perspective represents a milestone of the United Nations policy, this organization establishing so far ten resolutions to facilitate women’s inclusion in peace processes and their protection from conflict violences. Analyzing the central points of these resolutions, I could notice that gender perspective evolved from recognizing the negative impact conflicts have on women and their potential to be actively involved in conflict prevention and mitigation, to identifying sexual violence as a war tactic, developing dedicated structures and measurement indicators to assess progress and even to establishing laws and ways to punish perpetrators (United Nations Development Programme 2019, 6).

The reviewed literature shows that the seventeen SDGs adopted by UN in 2015 complement the same multinational organization’s WPS Agenda issued in 2000 and previous initiatives in this area, this alignment being expected to contribute to accomplishing especially three SDGs: no. 5, no. 8 and no. 16 (United Nations Development Programme 2019, 12). As a result, it becomes clearer that gender perspective is seen as a steering element for attaining the sustainability of this important part of HR, but also of HR, in general. For instance, three out of ten targets associated with SDG no. 8, which generally refers to “decent work and economic growth”, are focused on ensuring women with inclusive work conditions, the main purpose being to eliminate old problems, like “forced labor, modern slavery and human trafficking” (United Nations Development Programme 2019, 13).

Although, apparently, SDG no. 16, which stands for “peace, justice and strong institutions” has nothing to do with gender equality, its importance in obtaining real results in this direction cannot be contested, taking into account, on one hand, the contribution that injustice and exclusion could have on conflict generation, and on the other hand, the reverse effect that conflict could have on positive gains obtained so far in the gender equality spectrum (United Nations Development Programme 2019, 13). At this point it is noteworthy that this objective can be considered valuable not only for women, but also for men, though the SD context balances more to the feminist approach, based on the reality that women are more exposed to discrimination and negative effects of conflicts (United Nations

Development Programme 2019, 2). Considering this multidimensional approach to gender perspective, my opinion is that the connection between these SDGs is paramount, highlighting the need to comprehensively apply institutional and legislative instruments to obtain the desired effects.

But UN is not the only multinational organization interested in solving the complex problems associated with gender perspective. Thus, Resolution 1325 (United Nations Security Council 2000, 1-4) was operationalized seven years later by NATO through its own *Women, Peace and Security (WPS) Agenda*, the Alliance having a transformative approach as a recognition of the special way this problematic needs to be addressed, taking into account three main directions: integration, inclusiveness and integrity, with the components (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2020, 1) briefly presented in the following table:

Table no. 1 Main directions of NATO gender equality policy

Directions	Integration	Inclusiveness	Integrity
Measures	Change: intelligence requests Cooperation with military and civilian partners Gender perspective in all NATO military activities, operations and missions, and defense planning process (gender advisors)	Improving gender balance across NATO Gender inclusive language Sharing experience	Policies for clear standards Prevention and response to sexual harassment

Source: based on https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/2020/10/pdf/2010-factsheet-WPS-en.pdf, accessed May 9, 2022.

With time, NATO became more involved in gendered problems. This is the result of a higher interest in identifying means to address the problematic related to women’s employment in the military, in a context when the number of women that serve in this domain increased considerably (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 74). To ensure relevant information to decision-makers in the Alliance, an integrative scientific report published last year reveals four main themes that preoccupied many researchers during 2000-2020, namely: employment and integration of women in the armed forces, sexual violence and harassment, characteristics of military kit and equipment and health factors related to military women (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 74).

In my opinion, this approach is the best if the intention is to support women’s empowerment and accession in the military sphere. Moreover, this view is highly supported by two main findings: the former highlights the essential role played by leadership in relation with adapting the organizational culture and prevention of sexual abuse, while the latter reveals a somehow evident reality that military women present distinct physical strengths which need to be taken into consideration to avoid injuries and when designing military equipment (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 4). As subsequent findings, the same report mentions “the uncritical acceptance of existing masculine norms as gender-neutral standards” (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 11), fact that could threaten women’s military career.

However, aspects that support and hinder retention of women in the military are largely presented in the mentioned report, and these are crucial, in my opinion, for the sustainability of DHR, requiring, from case to case, development or reduction. From the military organization perspective, for example, the fact that operational effort has positive results when women participate in combat teams (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 22) should definitely be explored at maximum extent, despite of the existing biases. Nevertheless, researchers point to the need that future female recruits be

completely informed about their rights and mostly about their real job obligations, to prevent attraction of unsuitable personnel, that want to leave the system after admission (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 23). What is more, is that NATO recognizes the challenges the emerging technologies might pose to military women, admitting the need to conduct further research in this area (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 4). Further research was also expected in 2021, on several important aspects of the gender perspective, like: integration of gender perspective into the military educational programs, with accent on eliminating gender biases, implementation of standards related to collection and sharing of data, identification of tools to eliminate unnecessary barriers during selection, mapping the main factors that cause attrition, quantitative investigations related to sexual harassment, and other significant issues related to gender framework in NATO (NATO Science and Technology Organization 2021, 16-75).

To stress the importance of gender perspective in NATO, a recent declaration made by NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg at the NATO Youth Summit organized on April 28, 2022, points to the need that gender discrimination be treated as a critical security factor and therefore, included in the next strategic concept (Stoltenberg 2022). This idea is deeply rooted in the results presented in the last annual report, where gender integration is treated as a capability (NATO Secretary General 2021, 113). Furthermore, this report presents another important achievement related to gender perspective in the context of SD, materialized by the fact that NATO's Climate Change and Security Action Plan, adopted in June 2021, sustains the different impact climate change has on women, opening thus a new subject for debate from the environment perspective (NATO Secretary General 2021, 113). I believe this measures would bring more involvement from the member states, with great potential to tackle a wider range of unsolved gendered problems.

The contribution of gender equality perspective to the sustainability of defense human resources, in the context of sustainable development

In order to identify the gender perspective's contribution to the sustainability of DHR, I will start from the conceptual model provided in the first subsection. Subsequently, its four main conditions and their elements will be analyzed from the perspective of gender policies promoted by UN and NATO.

Firstly, the gender equality perspective could contribute to DHR sustainability from outside the military organization. From my perspective, the extern drivers could be represented at least by the demographic evolution, the results of the educational system, the level of employment, the gross domestic product (GDP), the security context and the civilian people's support to the military actions. All these drivers could have an impact on achieving several of the essential requirements provided in the conceptual model, like: legitimacy of military actions, responsibility, trust, cohesion, decent work (the parts related to cooperation, improved working conditions), work-system sustainability and adequate financing.

In my view, the above extern drivers influence the level of HR the military organization can attract. Nevertheless, the gender perspective, in general, not only in the military, could have an influence on the number of both men and women who could choose the military path. Recent studies show the demographic evolution determined by women's empowerment stands at the core of a rightly dimensioned population (United Nations. Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2022), and as a consequence, of a sustainably sized army. Excepting this positive impact, also a negative influence could appear in the military domain. For example, the third reason invoked by women who leave the military system is represented by not being able to have a balance between the military career and the

family life, after retirement and personal undisclosed reasons (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2019, 64).

Another extern driver for HR defense sustainability is represented by the results of the educational system, in general, from which the military organization retains a lot of benefits and which can also be allocated to women's empowerment, as statistic data show. For instance, at the global level, female teachers have a higher level of representation than male teachers in primary (67%) and secondary (85%) education, and a smaller one in tertiary education, academic staff (43%) (The World Bank 2019). At European level, in 2020, the percentage of women working as teachers was between 88,1% and 99,15% (EUROSTAT 2020). This contribution translates into a sustainable work in every domain, where the possibility to maximize knowledge ensures conditions for any organization to attain its objectives. However, these numbers reflect a domain opposed to the military one, females dominating the scene, in comparison with male counterparts, posing questions of gender equality from the men's perspective.

The last four extern drivers that facilitate the gender perspective's contribution to the defense HR sustainability (the GDP, the security context, the civilian people's support for the military actions and the level of unemployment) are, in my opinion, directly proportional to both women's and men's participation in the military organization, but detailed studies should be conducted to evaluate exactly to what extent these factors influence women's decisions to join the military system.

Secondly, I will refer to intern drivers generated by the military management. As I mentioned in the first part, the existence of a HR sustainability strategy is paramount in any organization oriented toward an efficient and durable resource management and it should also be developed in the military organization. Among the HR sustainability objectives that should be taken into account by this strategy, military management should include policies to attract, retain and regenerate the HR in such an amount that they be permanently available in the right level, at the right time. The three core directions adopted by NATO, presented in the second part of this article, could also be taken into consideration, as they are intended to enhance women's participation in the military system. For instance, concrete actions like improving the balance between work and family life were taken by NATO members, like: the possibility to transfer parental leaves between parents (62%), to choose part-time positions (52%), or to benefit from flexible working hour options (78%) (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2019, 60-61). Important steps were also made to sustain military women reintegration in civilian life, at the end of active duty (NATO Secretary General 2021, 115). This factor, is, in my opinion, of great concern for the ones at the middle or end of the military service and should be taken into consideration even from the beginning, so that young women who want to join this system be aware of their possibilities and not be determined to quit.

Other examples include policies to improve the levels of women's participation into the reserve (14%), to promote their recruitment (41%) and to develop different enlistment requirements for men and women (78%), to establish specific retention policies targeting women (26%) and to create networks to support women (63%) (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2019, 38-57). By far, the most important policy adopted by NATO members is the Policy on the Prevention, Management and Combatting of Harassment, Bullying and Discrimination adopted in November 2020 (NATO Secretary General 2021, 120), fact that ensures women an enhanced assurance that they can benefit from a safe work-place in the military system. The integrity problem is a real one, as 2019 marked the enlisting of 8,829 incidents, the gender being disclosed in 934 cases (76% affected women, while 24% affected men), and undisclosed in 7,895 cases (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2019, 104). It is obvious incidents like these could have a negative impact on both men and women in the military organization, but especially on women, who are more vulnerable. All in all, with

these measures, NATO military management shows, from my perspective, a high level of emotional intelligence and also the intent to get to higher levels of women's participation, to enhance its sustainability.

So far, this gender equality orientation resulted in increased percentages of military women. For instance, 2021 marked an important evolution, as the number of women in NATO Members Armed Forces doubled for the first time in twenty years, reaching 12%, also an increase being registered in the case of female officers (NATO Secretary General 2021, 114). This progress has a direct impact on the availability of the military HR. Moreover, analyzing the last published NATO report, I noticed that, in 2019, women did not have a domain in which they outnumbered men. Nevertheless, the published data show women occupy 46% in health care, 34% in legal and 33% in personnel and public affairs, and have a smaller representation in aerospace control (18%), training development (17%), logistics (16%), signals (13%), aerospace engineer (10%) (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2019, 75). These are domains in which I believe the average level of representation could be much higher, because some of them are comparable with the civilian ones, in which women outnumber men (North Atlantic Treaty Organization 2020, 2). Additionally, because data show women also occupy positions in combat support and combat areas, these spheres should remain open to this category.

With regard to the environmental domain of sustainability, recently published data reveal an increase in the percentage of professional women who activate in this area. For example, at European level, statistics show 2020 was the first year when environmentalist women outnumbered by 1% their male counterparts (EUROSTAT 2022). Additionally, at the international level, there are voices who sustain the enhanced contribution the gender equality in general, and female involvement, in particular, could have in obtaining a greener world (Van Bronkhorst 2022).

Consequently, the military organization could benefit from women's orientation in this field, designing positions to ensure both the need for sustainable HR, and the goal of protecting the environment.

Finally, the last type of driver that determines DHR sustainability is represented by those qualities that complement the level of real competences and determine a high probability that military employees remain in the system, which should characterize both men and women. When it comes to gender perspective's contribution, the reviewed studies were oriented toward identifying whether women have a higher degree of emotional intelligence, essential element for the HR sustainability. Thus, a comprehensive international study conducted between 2011-2015, concluded that "women outperform men in 11 of 12 key emotional intelligence competencies", sustaining women's empowerment and their ability to generate organizational performance (Korn Ferry Institute 2016). Nevertheless, specific studies of a similar magnitude should be conducted with participants from the military sphere, in order to consider women's emotional intelligence as a positive factor of DHR sustainability.

Conclusions

The context of sustainable development could be a very favorable one for the strategic decision-makers, because it offers ideas and solutions for enhancing the efficient usage of defense resources, in times when pandemics, war and economic crises stretch the managerial efforts to the limits. This idea is based on several findings. First, the sustainability model provided in this article ensures a comprehensive understanding of the broad concept represented by DHR sustainability. However, this preliminary model should be regarded as a starting point and could be improved with elements that facilitate the implementation of

concrete actions in this direction. Apart from being extremely useful for accomplishing the other objectives of this research, the conceptual model has the potential of offering the military decision-makers a summarized perspective on the main directions which should be developed when designing a DHR sustainability strategy, taking into account the specificity of the military system highlighted in the first part.

Second, for the core objective of this article, the model served as an inventory framework, providing the pillars of DHR sustainability, on one hand, and the outcomes expected from one of its central elements represented by women's sustainable career, on the other hand. As a matter of fact, this element proved to have a high potential to activate a lot of actions for obtaining a sustainable DHR, as depicted from the second section. Additionally, the military lens attributed to the gender equality perspective in the second part reveals there is a vivid awareness at the military leadership level in most NATO countries, though different approaches and asymmetric results highlight a lack of common understanding, unity of effort, accountability, transparency and communication, which could translate in significant delays related to the practical implementation of the military women's empowerment measures that facilitate the readiness of this new capability. For this reason, there is a pronounced likelihood that the positive contributions presented in the third part be neglected and postponed, in the detriment of the military organization, and even of the entire society's sustainable development.

Third, the idea of a new form of military capability is highly sustained by statistical inputs from the last part of the article, where the real contribution that gender equality perspective can have to the sustainability of DHR is not negligible at all, consisting mainly of ensuring the quantitative and qualitative input to a sustainability that allows the military organization's alignment to the global, regional and national efforts to have a permanent access to resources. From this perspective, military women's empowerment has the potential of obtaining a sustainable in itself human resource, especially if further research is conducted to identify the full spectrum of military positions and occupations that are more suitable for women and the instruments that facilitate their recruitment and retention.

Finally, the contribution of gender equality perspective to the sustainability of DHR could be a favorable one for the sustainability of military organization, in the context of sustainable development. Therefore, further detailed research is needed to complete the findings of this article. In my opinion, a good start would be the validation of the proposed conceptual model, followed by identification of concrete steps that need to be taken by the military leadership, to ensure the attractivity for the military career and the continuous availability of the DHR. To facilitate future studies in this area, accountability, enhanced cooperation and transparency measures must also be put in place.

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