
**PUBLIC EMPLOYER IN THE LABOR MARKET - THE ARMED FORCES
IN PUBLIC PERCEPTION**

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Abstract. Public organizations, including the armed forces, like other employers, are looking for candidates for soldiers and military personnel in the labor market. Taking into account the attributes that make up the attractiveness of an employer and their interdependence, a study was carried out in the course of which the aim was to find out how one of the public organizations, the armed forces, is perceived by people who may become soldiers or who may take up a job in the military how the sources of information through which it reaches them are assessed, and which of its features may attract their attention. The goal was achieved by carrying out, in the first quarter of 2022, a nationwide survey of people between the ages of 18 and 44. Aiming to better understand the opinions of respondents, an analysis of the labor market situation in all voivodeships was carried out. To analyze the collected data and present the results, Statistica v.13.3 and R/RStudio software were used. As a result of the survey, it was possible to establish that the armed forces enjoy a high level of trust among citizens. Respondents assessed the qualities and motives, tangible and intangible, that may encourage service and work in the military due to the potential benefits for candidates. From the perspective of the armed forces, indications as to individual elements can be the basis for improving personnel policies and marketing communications.

Keywords: public employer; labor market competition; employer attractiveness; motives for joining the service; social trust; tangible and intangible characteristics of service.

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Introduction

The armed forces, being a specialized state body that directly reports to the central executive authority (Pawłowski, Zdrodowski, Kuliczkowski, 2020, p. 204; Balcerowicz, 1996, p. 68), are an organization that is part of the public sector, aimed at providing a public good that is universally available to citizens, which is national defense (Piotrowska-Trybull, Jabłońska-Wołoszyn, 2020, p. 624-625). Characterized by a specific system of goals and values, they are linked to society (Sirko, Piotrowska-Trybull, 2013, p. 175; Wadjdi, Tam-bayong, & Sianturi, (2023). Their attributes also include: military nature, hierarchical nature, subordination to the highest state authorities, possession of weapons, separate disciplinary regulations, and centralized forms of supply (Polak, 2021, p. 52-63; Jakubczak, 2003, p. 176-184; Smith, 2010, p. 26, 29-30).

As a public employer, due to the professionalization of the military, the armed forces compete in the civilian labor market for soldier candidates and civilian employees with certain competencies.

Accordingly, in the personnel process, they should take into account labor market conditions (Bäckström, 2019, p. 814) including employment trends set by globalization and military financing (Dubauskas, 2021; Besenyő & Málnássy, 2022), the changing pace of work and the pursuit of life balance, demographic conditions (Aboul-Ela, 2016, p. 154; Paulikas & Paulikienė, 2022), the socio-economic situation, also how, as an employer, they are perceived by potential candidates and military personnel and employees (Smith, Heinecken, 2014, p. 103-105; Warner, Simon, Payne, 2003, p. 329-342; Jukšs, 2021). The latter is due to the fact that in an increasingly competitive labor market, employees are placing greater demands on employers, who are competing to attract and retain them in the organization. In particular, candidates' interest in a particular job is influenced by such factors as the qualifications and competencies they possess, the nature and type of work, the requirements formulated by the employer, the amount of salary offered and related expectations of employees (Kurek, 2022a, p. 134-136; Sibiya, Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023), other salary bonuses, the availability of jobs, and the candidate's preferred employer characteristics.

In the literature, we find a number of studies relating to the desirable and expected characteristics of employers, which determine their attractiveness, employer branding and positive image, as elements that strengthen the competitive advantage in the market and, as a result, foster an increase in interest in working for a particular employer (Bakanauskiene, Bendaravičienė, Barkauskė, 2017; Kozak, 2018; Babikova, Bucek, 2019; Hanu, Amegbe, Mensah, 2021; Haurovi, Chilunjika, 2023; Jansen, Vyas-Doorgapersad, 2023). The issues presented emphasize the role of marketing communications, including social media (Baruk, Wesołowski, 2021, p. 3; Figiel, Czajkowska-Sowa, 2021, p. 658), the attractiveness of the organization based on the use of modern IT tools by HRM departments (Kurek 2021, p. 153) and in connection with CSR activities (Wołodźko, Woźniak, 2017), the attractiveness of the organization defined through the prism of obtainable benefits (Hanu, Amegbe, Mensah, 2021, p. 1-2) functional, economic, psychological as the basis for brand building (Ambler, Barrow, 1996, p. 187). The importance of employer branding as a support for candidates making the decision to be a part of the organization or not to apply to it, building commitment of the organization's employees (Staniec, Kalińska-Kula 2021, p. 41), differentiated approach in this regard depending on generational characteristics (Jaswal, Bhattacharya, 2022, p. 653-656; Reis, Braga, 2016; Bejtkovský, 2018) is emphasized. A diverse palette of employer attributes, interacts to attract candidates (Samoliuk, Bilan, Mishchuk, Mishchuk, 2022) and retain employees (Kurek, 2022b), and is analyzed from various perspectives including economic, psychological, functional, organizational (Kucherov, Zavyalova, 2012 per: Ghadeer Mohamed Badr ElDin Aboul-Ela, 2016, p. 156).

Given the multiplicity of attributes that make up the attractiveness of an employer, and their interdependence, the research sought to learn how the armed forces are perceived in the public perception, and which features of the military may attract the attention of labor market candidates in the context of imagining them as potential benefits in connection with the choice of this employer.

The labor market situation in the Polish voivodeships as a factor determining the personnel policy of the organization

Economic, social, political, legal, technological, international conditions determine the situation in the labor market, which at the same time affects changes in the personnel policy of the organization (Adeniran et al., 2023). They are aimed at its adaptation to the requirements of the internal and external labor market in order to increase the effectiveness and/or efficiency of the organization's operations. Depending on the type of organization and its attributes, as well as the characteristics of the market in which it operates, adaptation requirements vary.

From 2017 to 2021, the voivodeships have seen improvements in the labor market. The unemployment rate decreased, which in 2019 in all voivodeships took the lowest values in the period under review (Table 1). During these years, the positive trend was halted in 2020 as a result of the spread of the SARS-COV-2 pandemic, which involved the introduction of a number of restrictions limiting the activities of businesses, consequently leading to an increase in unemployment and a decrease in the number of people working in the economy.

Table 1. Registered unemployment rate by voivodeship in 2017-2021

Voivodeships	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Lower Silesia	5.7	5.2	4.6	5.6	4.8
Kuyavian-Pomeranian	9.9	8.8	7.9	9	7.7
Lublin	8.8	8.0	7.5	8.2	7.2
Lubusz	6.5	5.8	4.9	6.3	4.9
Łódź	6.7	6.1	5.4	6.2	5.6
Lesser Poland	5.3	4.7	4.1	5.3	4.5
Masovian	5.6	4.9	4.4	5.2	4.6
Opole	7.3	6.3	5.8	6.9	6.0
Subcarpathian	9.6	8.7	7.9	9.1	8.2
Podlasie	8.5	7.7	6.9	7.8	7.0
Pomeranian	5.4	4.9	4.5	5.9	5.1
Silesian	5.1	4.3	3.6	4.9	4.2
Holy Cross	8.8	8.3	8.0	8.5	7.3
Warmian-Masurian	11.7	10.4	9.1	10.2	8.6
Greater Poland	3.7	3.2	2.8	3.7	3.1
West Pomeranian	8.5	7.4	6.8	8.4	7.1

Source: stat.gov.pl , accessed 18.11.2022.

The improvement in the labor market situation was also reflected in other indicators (except for 2020): the number of total employees in the economy, the number of employees in the private sector, the number of newly created jobs exceeding the number of liquidated jobs (with the exception of Opole in 2020), in some voivodeships the number of employees in the public sector, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises per 10 thousand residents (Table 2). Detailed analysis shows that in terms of the number of total employed in the three voivodeships – Mazovian, Subcarpathian, Greater Poland, it increased in each of the analyzed years, including during the pandemic period. However, against the background of other voivodeships, the exception was the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship, where the number of employed decreased over the analyzed years. An identical situation, by voivodeship, occurred with regard to the number of employees in the private sector - an uninterrupted increase in the Mazovian, Subcarpathian and Greater Poland voivodeships, and a decrease in the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship. In half of the voivodeships, the number of people working in the public sector over the analyzed period increased, while it decreased in Lubusz, Łódź, Opole, Silesian, Holy Cross, Warmian- Masurian, Greater Poland, West Pomeranian voivodeships (bdl.stat.gov.pl, 23.02.2023). It is difficult to determine unequivocally to what extent this was influenced by the pandemic and to what extent by the process of labor rationalization embedded in the NPM concept (which includes reducing the size of the sector; using independent service providers, etc.). (Zawicki, 2011).

Table 2. Small and medium-sized enterprises per 10,000 residents by voivodeship in 2017-2021

Voivodeships	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Lower Silesia	1269	1292	1319	1369	1426
Kuyavian-Pomeranian	939	950	981	1016	1052
Lublin	834	853	878	919	960
Lubusz	1110	1116	1157	1199	1247
Łódź	992	1003	1035	1072	1114
Lesser Poland	1120	1150	1201	1249	1305
Masovian	1501	1509	1574	1634	1710
Opole	1015	1022	1049	1081	1116
Subcarpathian	803	820	851	887	930
Podlasie	854	871	895	932	971

Voivodeships	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Pomeranian	1263	1270	1310	1356	1413
Silesian	1032	1041	1065	1099	1143
Holy Cross	899	915	943	979	1022
Warmian-Masurian	874	889	926	962	1001
Greater Poland	1208	1229	1274	1318	1367
West Pomeranian	1307	1316	1345	1386	1430

Source: stat.gov.pl, accessed 18.11.2022.

As highlighted, the entrepreneurship rate increased in all voivodeships during the analyzed period. Taking the 2017 value as 100%, the growth dynamics in 2021 ranged from 9.41% in West Pomerania to 16.51% in Lesser Poland. The voivodeships that registered the lowest level of entrepreneurship in 2017: Subcarpathian, Lublin, Podlasie, Warmian-Masurian, Holy Cross (from 803 to 899 small and medium-sized enterprises per 10 thousand residents) in 2021, compared to the base year, recorded high growth dynamics: Subcarpathian 15.41%, Lublin 15.1%, Warmian-Masurian 14.5%, Podlasie 13.7%, Holy Cross 13.68%.

Studying the labor market situation in the voivodeships, the subject of analysis was also made the job advertisements in Poland, which on December 30, 2022 were on the website <https://oferty.praca.gov.pl>. The data was downloaded in the form of the file offer_export_2022_12_30.csv. The largest number of job offers, among the analyzed 1,7217 offers, was from the voivodeships of Silesia, Lower Silesia, Lesser Poland, the smallest from the voivodeships of Podlasie, Lublin and Lubusz. Generally speaking, among the offers there was a predominant demand for medium and low-skilled workers who perform tasks in executive positions. Recalculating the number of unemployed per number of offers in each voivodeship, it was found that the largest number was in the Lublin, Subcarpathian and Mazovian voivodeships, and the smallest in the Lubusz, Pomerania and Silesian voivodeships (Figure 1).

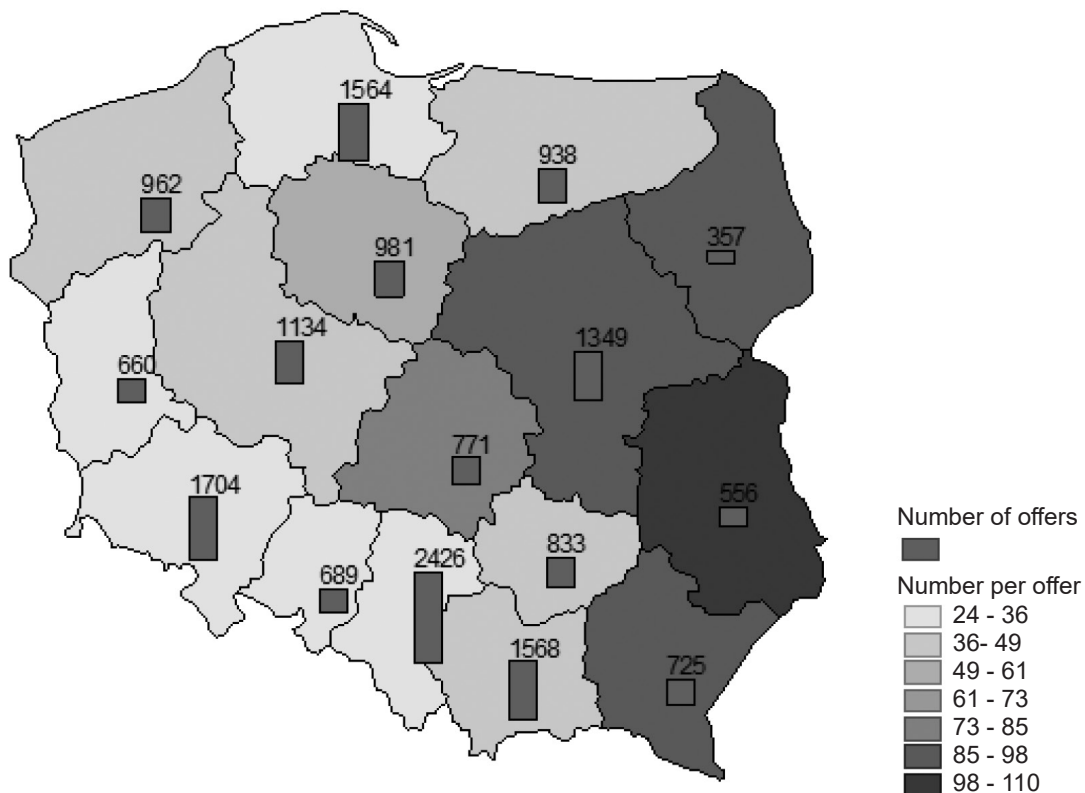


Figure 1. Number of job offers and number of unemployed per offer

Source: own compilation based on data from <https://oferty.praca.gov.pl> and CSO data.

Despite the different labor market situation of the individual voivodeships, as reflected in the cited indicators, in general the situation has improved over the years in each of them. One of the effects of the improved labor market situation is the intensifying competition among employers for candidates to fill job vacancies and retain existing employees in the organization. Employers competing with each other use tangible and intangible instruments, which also affect their attractiveness as employers. The private sector, compared to the public sector, has a greater capacity in this regard in terms of the variety and size of the available instruments. For public sector organizations, including the armed forces, it is important to have information about themselves in the media space, the opinions of employees and young people entering the labor market about what characteristics of employers are important to them, what values and motives guide their choice. Hence, various types of rankings constructed based on employees' assessment of employer attributes (which can also potentially be used to make changes in personnel policies) can be considered as one source of information.

One such example is the Best Employers Poland 2022 ranking, in which 1,800 employees from entities employing at least 250 people rated their employers in several areas: image and growth, remuneration, opportunities for promotion and development (criteria for promotion, training programs, sharing information and working together to overcome difficulties), employee relations and management (appreciation of achievements, respect from superiors, fair division of labor, climate of trust and honesty), sustainability (collective responsibility and environmental awareness), workload (flexible working hours, use of vacations), office and remote working conditions and equipment. In addition, respondents answered the question of how likely they were to recommend their employer to friends and family members, and also identified employers worthy of recommendation in the industry in which they are employed (Zielewski P., 2022). Similar criteria for evaluating employers were identified for the Reliable Employer ranking, for 2021, (<https://solidnypracodawca.pl/>, accessed 24.02.2023):

- working conditions (respect for health and safety regulations, labor laws, etc.),
- timeliness of payments,
- social conditions,
- career path (employee training),
- external and internal opinions about the company (including PIP, labor offices, local authorities and environment, employees),
- employment dynamics over the past years (status, increase/decrease in employment - reasons for these phenomena).

Another example is a survey conducted by the AIESEC organization, in which 967 students were asked about the importance of particular factors for them as future employees. Among the factors were (the highest rated ones are in bold font):

- financial – **salary**, business travel, bonuses;
- professional – **influence on company operations**, responsibility of the position, familiarity with the company's area, quality of work accounted for by results;
- social – **respect for private life**, work atmosphere, company activity in social media, impact of company activities on the country and society;
- communal - **the possibility of working remotely**, quality accounted for by hours worked, the ability to set one's own schedule, non-stressful pace of work.

The results of this survey indicated that the following factors influence the choice of employers: opinions of employees and friends (61.32%), popularity of the company (55.53%), salary (45.29%), mission and values (27.09%), involvement in student initiatives (26.47%), social and environmental activities (24.82%) (Pracodawcy Roku® (Employer of the Year) 2021 Survey Report, AIESEC 2023).

The analysis and literature studies carried out determined the shape of the survey research on the public perception of the armed forces in the context of organizational characteristics, sources of information and motives potentially influencing the decision to apply to this employer.

3. Research objective and methodology

The survey research was carried out in the first quarter of 2022. 537 people participated, from all voivodeships in Poland. Maintaining the criterion of gender and age, an appropriate group of respondents was drawn from each voivodeship, in proportion to its population. In view of the issues addressed (labor market, interest in joining the military service), the survey was conducted among people between the ages of 18 and 44. For this population, determined on the basis of CSO data, the sample size (where: maximum error = 5%) was 384 people.

The survey included 273 men (51.5%) and 257 women (48.5%). Most of them were working (82.4% among men, 76.6% among women). Others were learning or studying (12.1% of men, 14.4% of women), or unemployed (5.5% of men, 9.0% of women). Among respondents, both men and women, those with a high school education predominated (respectively: 54.6%, 51.4%). A large group among them (24.5% of men and 29.2% of women) had a university degree. The rest were graduates of vocational schools, post-secondary schools and junior high schools. Some of the respondents (17.4%), currently or previously, were learning in a uniformed class (22.9% of the participating high school and college students, 17.1% of those in the labor force, 10.3% of the unemployed). Those taking part in the survey lived in rural areas (14.5% of respondents) and in smaller and larger cities: up to 20,000 people (5.84%), 20,000 to 50,000 people (16.6%), 50,000 to 100,000 people (30.2%), 100,000 to 200,000 people (19.6%) and cities with more than 200,000 people (13.6%).

For the purpose of the analyses, three age groups of respondents were distinguished: group A - those aged 18-26 (22.2%), group B – those aged 27-35 (35.5%), group C - those aged 36-44 (42.3%). Group A was dominated by people learning and studying (56.8%), while Groups B and C were dominated by economically active people (respectively: 92.5%, 94.2%).

Based on the research tool designed by the authors, the survey was conducted by Instytut Badawczy IPC sp. z o.o. The survey questionnaire consisted of 19 closed and semi-open questions, 13 of which were substantive, related to the essence of the issues analyzed, while the rest were metrics. Questions were prepared using a nominal and ordinal scale.

In addition to the variables included in the metric (class profile - high school education, gender, age, education, place of residence, occupational activity), respondents' answers were also analyzed through the variables: 1) labor market, 2) entrepreneurship. These were created by cluster analysis (Euclidean distance, Ward's method), using data for 2017-2021, which were published by the CSO. These included 1) the registered unemployment rate in each voivodeship, and 2) the number of small and medium-sized enterprises per 10,000 residents. As a result, in the case of the "labor market" variable, three groups of voivodeships were identified by the level of this indicator: group 1. lowest values (Lower Silesia, Pomeranian, Lesser Poland, Mazovian, Silesia, Greater Poland), group 2. medium values (Lubusz, Łódź, Opole), group 3. highest values (Kuyavian-Pomeranian, Subcarpathian, Lublin, Holy Cross, Podlasie, West Pomeranian, Warmian-Masurian). While this variable differentiated the voivodeships by their labor market situation, the variable "entrepreneurship", allowed to identify four groups of voivodeships by the economic activity of the population: group 1. the highest values (Mazovian), group 2. above average (Lower Silesian, Pomeranian, West Pomeranian, Greater Poland), group 3. below average (Kuyavian-Pomeranian, Holy Cross, Warmian-Masurian, Lublin, Podlasie, Subcarpathian), group 4. lowest values (Lubusz, Lesser Poland, Łódź, Opole, Silesian).

After checking the completeness of the data contained in the questionnaires and their correctness, responses received from 530 respondents were qualified for further research proceedings (7 surveys were rejected). Analysis of the collected statistical material was carried out using the computer program Statistica v. 13.3 and the program R/RStudio v. 4.02. Statistical hypotheses were verified using the test χ^2 . A standard significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$ was adopted. References for the preparation of the description of statistical analyses, the results of which are included in the article, were the works of Buisson, 2022; Aczel; Sounderpandian, 2018; Freeman; Ross, 2019. In preparing Figures 3, 5, 7, the library (likert) and solutions presented at <https://www.r-graph-gallery.com/> were used.

During the survey research, answers were sought to the following questions:

- How do respondents perceive the military and what influences this?
- How do they evaluate sources of information about the military, from the perspective of their usefulness, and what influences this?
- What do they think might be the motives for deciding to join the military, and what determines this?

4. Results and discussion

Respondents were presented with a catalog of eleven characteristics of the military as an organization. These characteristics referred to the way the public perceives the military's activities and the attributes with which they associate it. Respondents expressed their opinion about each of the characteristics of the military by selecting one answer on a scale from 1 to 5 where: 1) meant to a very low degree, 2) to a low degree, 3) to a medium degree, 4) to a high degree, 5) to a very high degree. Those taking part in the survey had the opportunity to add additional attributes to the proposed set.

Respondents, most often associated the military with: soldiers' dedication to the homeland (83.4% of indications), acting in accordance with procedures (80.0%), the help they bring to the local community in a crisis situation (79.4%), physical fitness of soldiers (75.3%), and formalization (74.5%). Respondents' opinions on the selected characteristics (willingness to sacrifice for the homeland and to help local communities in emergencies) reflect trust in the armed forces and correspond with the persistence of one of the higher levels of public trust in the military among public institutions for many years (cf. www.cbos.pl; Omyła-Rudzka; Scovil). Trust in the military was affirmed by the vast majority of respondents 83.7% of those taking part in the survey, the results of which are presented (89.0% of men, 78.2% of women, 74.3% of those studying, 85.8% of those working and 79.0% of the unemployed, equally rural and urban residents).

Figure 2 shows statistically significant correlations between the variables included in the metric and the variables prepared on the basis of the analysis of the situation of each voivodeship, and respondents' opinions about the military. The characteristics of the military are listed in order of the number of response choices at the top of the measurement scale, indicating a high and very high degree of their association by respondents. Due to the number of statistically significant relationships, Figure 2 highlights the associations between the "class" variable and variables characterizing the military. The strength of the relationship for this and other variables (gray/light color), was mapped by character (solid and dashed line) and line thickness. The strongest relationship was identified with the traits physical fitness and acting in accordance with procedures. Respondents attending a uniformed class were more likely to emphasize these two basic requirements for soldiers, supplemented by the third trait of availability perceived in the provincial cross-section.

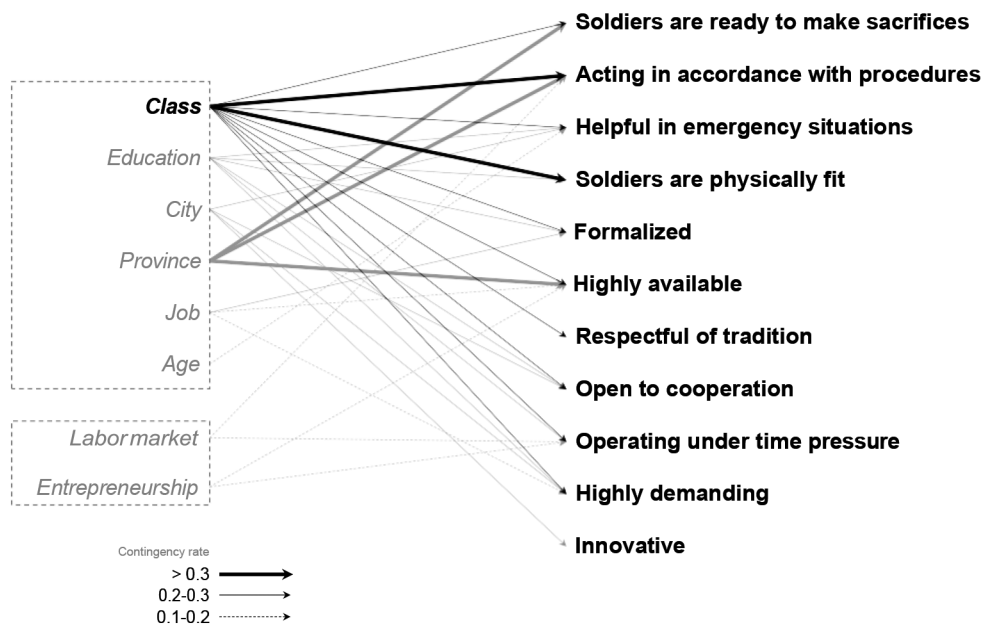


Figure 2. Statistically significant relationships between independent variables and variables characterizing the armed forces

Source: Own study.

Analyzing the responses of respondents, it was found that the opinions of those who declared that they were or are students of uniformed classes differed (statistically significant correlations at $p < 0.05$) from those of the rest of the survey participants (Figure 2, Figure 3). Greater or lesser variation in associations, between students/graduates of uniformed classes* and other respondents, was also evident when they expressed their opinion about other characteristics of the military (openness to cooperation: 25.5 p. p., respect for tradition: 23.7 p. p., availability of soldiers: 21.1 p. p., acting under time pressure: 11.6 p. p., innovation of the army: 3.1 p. p., placing high demands on soldiers: 1.7 p. p.).

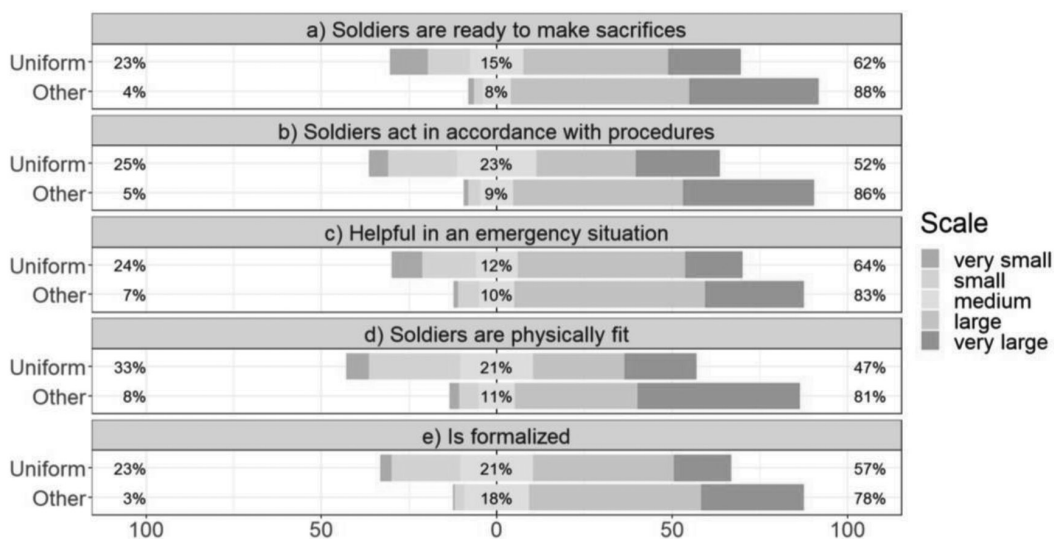


Figure 3. Degree of association of selected features of the military, taking into account the educational path of respondents

Source: Own study.

* According to information presented at https://dane.gov.pl/pl/dataset/1186/resource/39407,wyzkaz-szko-ponadgimnazjalnych-prowadzacych-piony-certyfikowanych-klasmundurowych/table?page=1&per_page=20&q=&sort= (accessed on 10.11.2022), as of June 2022, there were 115 secondary schools that operated divisions of certified uniformed classes.

In addition to the “class” variable, respondents’ opinions on the characteristics of the military also differed based on what kind of education they had and where they lived (voivodeship and town size). Other variables differentiated respondents’ answers to a lesser extent.

The military, like other organizations, needs to attract the right personnel for smooth functioning. Easier access to information and the use of modern technologies that permeate various areas of society can help in this regard. They not only allow people to express their views but are also a very powerful tool that can be used to reach out to new candidates. Therefore, during the survey, those taking part were asked to express their opinion (by choosing one answer on a scale from 1 to 5 where: 1) meant not useful, 2) not very useful, 3) moderately useful, 4) useful, 5) very useful) on the usefulness of various sources of information, in the context of obtaining information about the military (attributes, conditions of service, values, current activities, historical events).

Analyzing the distribution of respondents’ answers (% of choices from the upper range of the scale), through the prism of the variable group of voivodeships, distinguished by the variable entrepreneurship, it was found that respondents similarly assessed: (focus 1) the role of friends and family members in providing information about the organization, (focus 2) military websites and the Polish Army’s recruitment portal, (focus 3) participation in an open day at a military unit, social media, meetings organized with soldiers at schools, websites of military universities, Military Draft Office (WKU), programs on the Internet, (focus 4) the role of articles in the press, the role of films and television programs on military topics, advertisements on radio, television and the Internet, and popular science books on the military.

The listed sources of information are shown in Figure 4. They were ranked according to the number of choices made by respondents, indicating their good and very good usefulness for acquiring knowledge about the military.

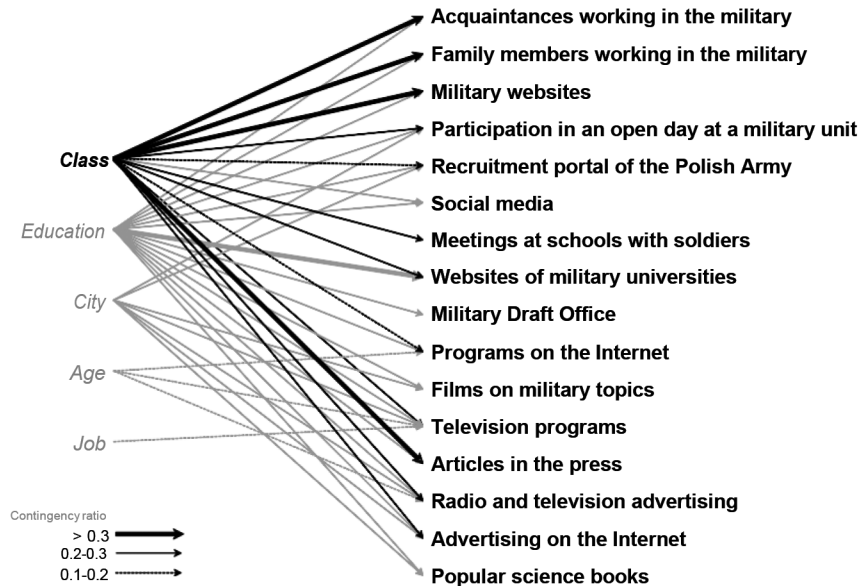


Figure 4. Statistically significant relationships between the independent variables and variables relating to sources of information

Source: Own study.

As with the evaluation of the characteristics of the military, the opinions of respondents studying in uniformed classes (or their graduates), differed from those of the other people who took part in the survey (the two groups compared the percentage of “useful” and “very useful” answer choices). In the case of the role of friends, as a source of information about the military, the difference was 32 p. p., and in the situation of family members it was 42 p. p. When the usefulness of military websites was evaluated, the disparity was more significant 30 p. p., while in the situation of participation in an open day at a military unit it was 14 p. p., and when evaluating the role of the Polish Army Recruitment Portal 13 p. p. There were differences when evaluating the other sources

of information: articles in the press 39.8 p. p., television programs 28.8 p. p., social media 23.0 p. p., advertising on radio and television 18.4 p. p., military-themed videos 12.8 p. p, websites of military universities 11.5 p. p., meetings with soldiers organized in schools 11.0 p. p., programs on the Internet 7.3 p. p., advertising on the Internet 5.1 p. p., WKU 3.0 p. p., popular science books on military topics 2.9 p. p.

Respondents' opinions on the usefulness of various sources, in the context of obtaining information about the military as a potential workplace, were also differentiated by the education they had (Figure 5), to a lesser extent by where they lived and their age.

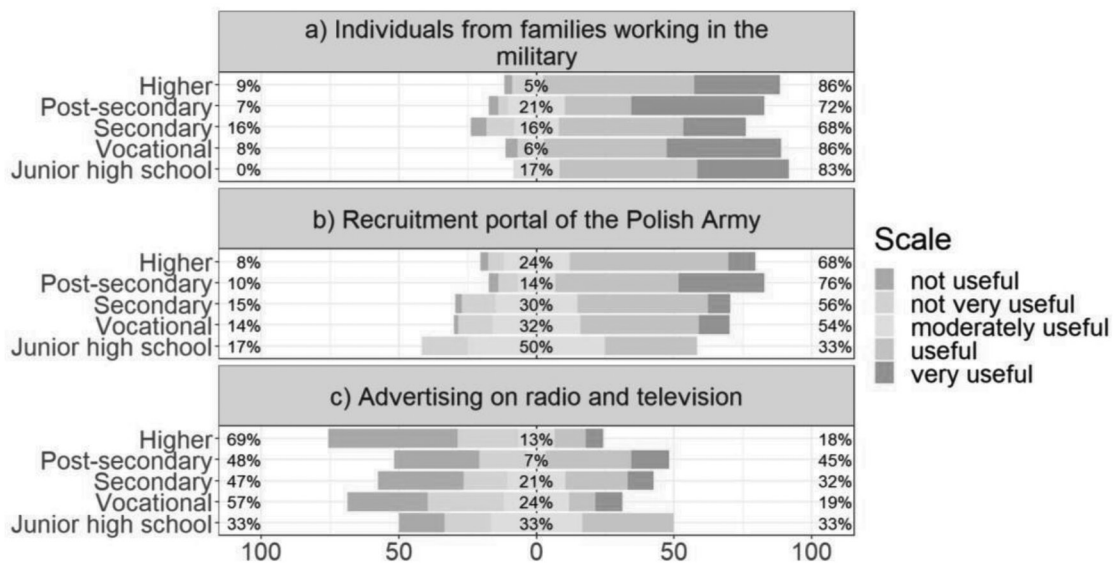


Figure 5. Evaluation of the usefulness of selected sources of information about the military, taking into account the education of the respondents

Source: Own study.

Analyzing the distribution of ratings that respondents gave when expressing their opinion on the usefulness of particular sources of information, in addition to the disparity in the perception of information sources by people with different educational backgrounds, it was noted that at times a high percentage of neutral ratings was evident (Figure 5, evaluation of the Polish Army Recruiting Portal). An equally high percentage of such responses was found in evaluations of the role of: television programs, books, meetings with soldiers at school, in acquiring information about the military.

In the next step, analyzing the percentage of “useful” and “very useful” answer choices, taking into account the respondents' education, four groups of information sources were identified whose usefulness was similarly perceived by them. The first group, rated best, included the following sources: family members, friends and military websites. The lowest percentage of rating choices indicating the usefulness of these sources, was among respondents with a high school education. Slightly lower ratings were given to the usefulness of (group two): military college websites, social media, military-themed videos, participation in open days, and programs on the Internet. Also in this group, the lowest percentage of indications of good and very good usefulness of the listed sources was found among those with a high school education. The next group - the 3rd - included: Military Draft Offices, the Polish Army Recruitment Portal and school meetings with soldiers. In this group, the lowest percentage of choices indicating good and very good usefulness of the listed sources was recorded among those with junior high school education. The remaining sources of information (group 4): articles in the press, TV programs, advertising on radio and TV, advertising on the Internet and books on military issues, in the opinion of those who took part in the survey, received the lowest percentage of choices, indicating their lower usefulness, in the context of obtaining information about the military.

Analyzing respondents' answers from the perspective of their age and place of residence also identified four groups of sources of information about the military similarly perceived in terms of their usefulness. The first included friends and family members. In this group, the lowest percentage of "useful" and "very useful" response choices was found among the youngest respondents and representatives of medium-sized cities. The second group included military websites, social media, the Polish Army's recruitment portal, meetings with soldiers at school and open days at military units. The lowest percentage of indications testifying to the usefulness of these sources was also recorded among the youngest survey participants, residents of medium-sized cities (and, in the social media situation, those living in rural areas). Programs on the Internet, websites of military universities, military-themed films and Military Draft Offices, formed another group of information sources. The high and very high usefulness of the listed sources was indicated by respondents in age group C (36 years and older), and residents of smaller cities. In the last group, as from the perspective of respondents' education, were: articles in the press, t.v. programs, advertising on radio and TV, advertising on the Internet, and books on military topics. Considering the usefulness of these sources, respondents belonging to the age groups of 18-26 and 27-35, as well as residents of cities with a population of more than 100,000, were least recognized.

People's needs are diverse. Among the factors that motivate them, in addition to fear, are curiosity, interest, ambition, a sense of duty, respect for authority, and the need for recognition. Motivation refers to those mental experiences that determine the possibility and direction of their actions Sekula 2008; Schultz, Schultz, 2002; Sokolowska 2005; Chmiel 2002).

Those taking part in the survey were asked to express their opinions on the motives that may guide those who join the military. In Figure 6, these motives are presented according to the number of response choices from the upper range of the measurement scale (respondents rated the importance of the motive on a scale from 1 to 5, where: 1) to a very low degree, 2) to a low degree, 3) to a medium degree, 4) to a high degree, 5) to a very high degree).

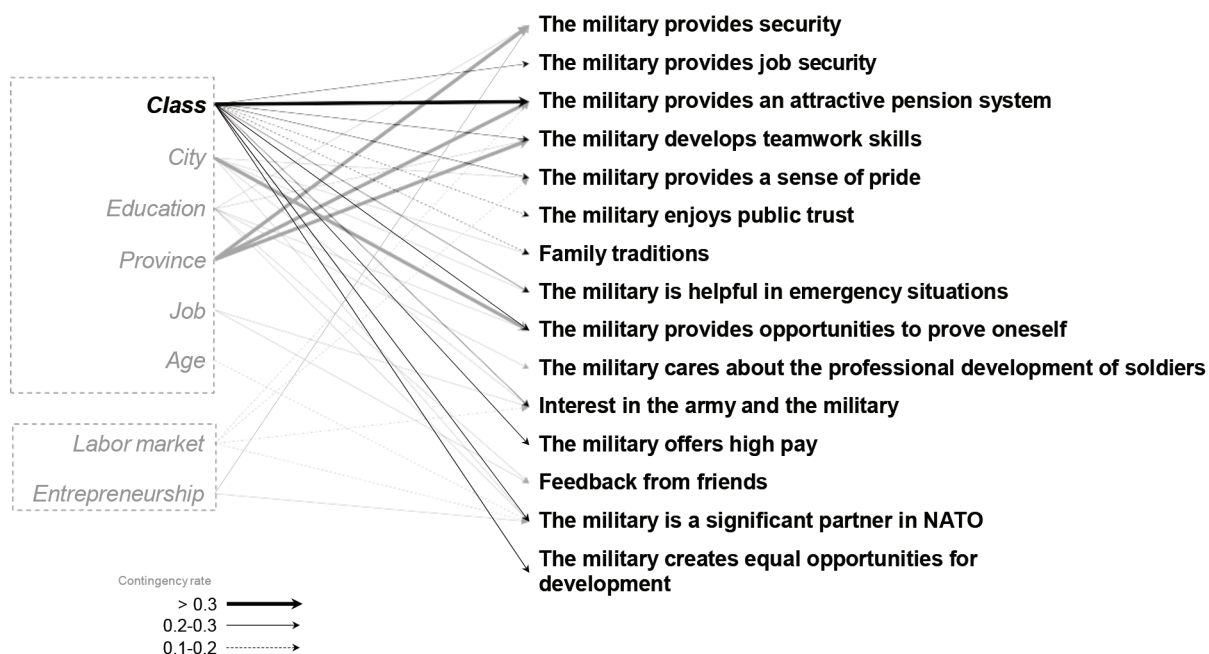


Figure 6. Statistically significant relationships between independent variables and variables related to motives influencing the decision to join the military

Source: Own study.

Further analysis identified five groups of motives that were similarly perceived by those who took part in the survey. The first motive (group 1), indicated by the largest percentage of respondents, was to ensure the security

of the country's population. The next group of motives consisted of those related to job security, an attractive pension system. The third group consisted of motives stemming from the military's role in NATO structures, public confidence in the military, the respondent's personal interests and the remuneration offered by the military. Another group (the fourth) consisted of the military's concern for the development of soldiers, the opportunity to prove themselves in certain situations, the development of teamwork skills, a sense of belonging to a particular group, helping others in difficult situations, and family traditions. The last group consisted of friends' opinions and the military's creation of equal opportunities for men and women.

Taking into account the educational experience (class variable) of those taking part in the survey, their education, age, and place of residence, it was found that in each situation, respondents had similar perceptions of the role of the military as a factor in ensuring the security of citizens and the military as a guarantor of employment. The variation in perceptions of selected motives from the perspective of the respondents' educational path is shown in Figure 7.

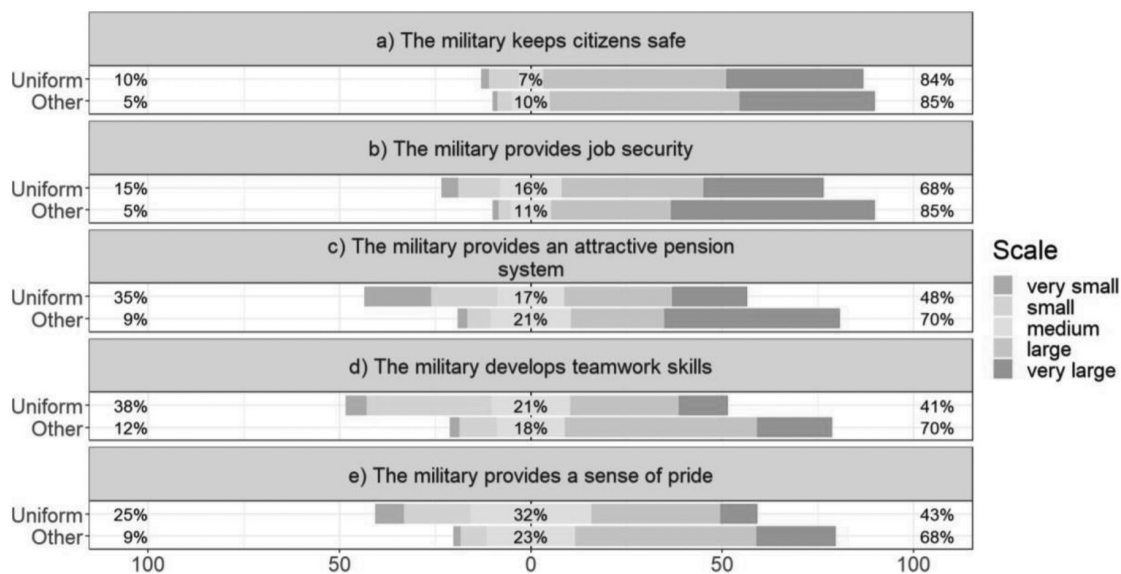


Figure 7. Respondents' opinions, taking into account their educational path, about selected motives that may influence the decision to join the military

Source: Own study.

Variation in perceptions of motives was also common based on the respondents' education and their place of residence. Taking into account the respondents' education, four groups of motives were identified: 1) providing security for citizens, job security, 2) the military's attention to the professional development of soldiers, an attractive pension system, salaries offered by the military and interest in the military, 3) public trust in the military, the sense of pride that working in the military gives, developing teamwork skills, helping society in emergency situations and family traditions, 4) belonging to NATO structures, the opportunity to prove oneself in various situations, creating equal opportunities for men and women, and the opinions of friends.

Analyzing the responses of those taking part in the survey from the perspective of their place of residence, five groups of similarly perceived motives were identified: 1) providing security for citizens, job security, 2) the military's position in NATO, friends' opinions about the military and the military's creation of equal opportunities for men and women, 3) the public trust the military enjoys, a sense of pride in working in the military, family traditions, the help the military brings to people in crisis situations, interest in the military, 4) the military's attention to the professional development of soldiers, the education offered by the military, 5) the opportunity to prove oneself in various circumstances, the development of teamwork in the military, the attractive pension system the military provides.

Conclusions

The volatility, uncertainty, complexity, ambiguity (VUCA world) (Jaswal, Bhattacharya, 2022) of conditions in the environment requires an organization to be able to adapt to change, prepare for different scenarios, anticipate difficulties and develop ways to respond to them, seek and understand the relationship between elements. In such a defined environment, there is competition for resources that allow organizations to survive and grow. The key resource is people. Their acquisition and retention in an organization is determined by a number of factors, including attributes that define them as employers of varying degrees of value in the labor market (Babikova, Bucek, 2019, p. 7-8; Piotrowska-Trybull, 2018, p. 106; Reis, Braga, 2016, p. 105-106; Sirko 2015, p. 32-35). Taking a system perspective, the effects of the armed forces – a public organization – are not so much evaluated through the prism of the financial result, but through the prism of the usefulness of their actions to society in the sphere of providing security to citizens (Sirko, Piotrowska-Trybull, 2013, p. 175-178). For the armed forces, the attribute with which it is socially associated - sacrifice for the homeland - is, on the one hand, important for the members of the organization, because it strengthens in them a sense of belonging to a group that is guided by a certain value in action, and on the other hand, it can meet the needs of young job seekers who would also like to satisfy this need (Jaswal, Bhattacharya, 2022, p. 652).

Analysis of the situation in the labor market in Poland in terms of challenges for employers (development of entrepreneurship, creation of new jobs, a relatively small stock of vacant labor resources expressed by the unemployment rate, also low birth rate) allows us to assume that competition for labor resources will intensify (also the example of the Czech Republic, Šnýdrová, Vnoučková, Šnýdrová, 2019, p. 159-160). Therefore, from the perspective of the armed forces as an employer, it is necessary to take measures aimed at appropriate exposure of socially perceived and valued attributes, responding to the needs of stakeholders, as to content and means of outreach, including social media (Figiel, Czajkowska-Sowa, 2021, p. 658) to attract new members. As the results of a study by Wołodźko, Woźniak indicated, a realistic picture of working conditions - even in seemingly insignificant details - increases the attractiveness of a job offer (Wołodźko, K., & Woźniak, J. 2017, p. 58), reduces the risk of hiring candidates for whom the work in the organization will not be satisfactory. No less important, in addition to reaching out to potential candidates, remain the activities carried out within the framework of personnel policies aimed at increasing the commitment of members of the organization, counteracting their departure (Staniec, Kalińska-Kula, 2021, p. 40-41).

The results of the survey indicate that in the public perception, the armed forces, in addition to the most commonly identified attribute of sacrifice for the homeland, are clearly associated by respondents with providing assistance to local communities in emergency situations - evoking strong emotions. A positive assessment of these activities reinforces the belief in their usefulness to citizens, and consequently also confidence in the institution (expressed by 83.7% of respondents). At the same time, it can be an element used in the internal policy of the organization by means of which the commitment of employees is influenced, as well as external needs - messages to potential candidates “you can be part of something important”.

Other characteristics, in order, perceived by respondents were: actions in accordance with procedures, physical fitness, formalization of activities, which, as it were, stem from the very nature of the organization.

As the most important source of information about the army and the military, the respondents highlighted, in different cross sections, friends and family members working in the military. This indicates the importance of face-to-face contacts, which are presumably characterized by freedom to dig deeper into content of interest to the interviewee. From an organizational perspective, this may send an important signal to managers regarding the challenges of ensuring the well-being of the organization's members, who largely contribute to creating its image in the environment. On the other hand, mediocre importance was attributed to the Polish Army Recruitment Portal (PRWP), also military-themed websites, military college websites, among others. Particularly in the context of the PRWP and encouraging candidates to serve, it should include an in-depth description of the conditions of service, supporting those interested in deciding on a career path (details related to the tangible and intangible characteristics of service). Whereas, the lowest ratings were given to materials of an advertising

nature in various mass media, which generally focus on a short message publicizing the actions carried out.

In the context of motives that could influence the decision to join the military, respondents most often, regardless of the criterion used, pointed to the institution's concern for the safety of citizens (potential benefit for the candidate in psychological terms - I am performing an important task of social importance). This was followed by the motive of job security and an attractive pension system (potential benefits of an economic nature). The third group of motives included community outreach, interests, salary, presence in NATO structures (both benefits of a functional, economic and psychological nature). The last group included motives related to opportunities for individual development, opportunities to work in a team, to prove oneself in stressful situations, as well as pride in belonging to this institution (benefits of a psychological and functional nature). Determining the hierarchy of motives associated with the attributes of the organization as an employer, in light of the values valued and expected by candidates, can be helpful in designing the assumptions of marketing communications, but also the personnel policy of the armed forces.

In the context of a number of cross-sections presented in the article, attention is drawn to the differences in the evaluation of individual elements by respondents who are pursuing or have pursued a "uniformed" educational path and those who have chosen other routes. Respondents from uniformed classes were more likely to rate the individual categories lower than the others. It seems that the image they have of the armed forces, being the result of somewhat closer contacts with military institutions and a deepening of knowledge regarding their functioning, is more critical. Hence, there emerges room for further exploration in the perspective of the professional expectations of young people versus the realities of the functioning of individual organizations and their potential for change.

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