

THE ARMED FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND AS AN EMPLOYER IN MODERN LABOUR MARKET IN OPINION OF SOLDIERS AND MILITARY STAFF

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ABSTRACT

As an employer, the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland (AF RP) engage in modern market competition to win over the professional service recruits and military staff. Search and retention of properly trained personnel may help the Polish armed forces to carry out their tasks in efficiency way. The article shows the selected results of the pilot survey dealing with the image of the armed forces as perceived by the soldiers and the military employees. The survey has been carried out as an opinion poll to identify the attributes of the AF RP as an employer and to determine significance of these attributes for the soldiers and the military employees. Results of the survey indicate that the attributes that make the Polish army stand out as an employer at the labour market include: stable employment, professional development opportunities, teamwork orientation, challenges and high demands from the organisation members, relatively high remuneration, and sense of mission in striving to be useful to the society.

Key words: attributes of employer, labour market, military units

INTRODUCTION

Changes in close and further surrounding of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland (AF RP) condition goals and tasks ahead of them. Achieving them requires i.a. searching the job market to find proper candidates to take up military service and work, and to develop skills of the soldiers and the army employees. To attract them, the AF RP compete with other employers, which makes personal policy and promotional actions the potential key factors affecting the image of the armed forces in society and determining interest in working for the army. In the selection process and during professional career candidates for soldiers and the army employees and soldiers in service compare traits of the armed forces and their attractiveness against other employers. Some of the military traits attributed

to the army reflects the specific nature of this organisation, i.a. discipline and close hierarchy, centrally set standards and rules, necessity to follow certain pattern of behaviour. The other ones shape as a result of the armed forces interacting with the surrounding, including evolution of concepts, methods and techniques of management affecting efficiency of their actions and are a consequence of technical and technological progress through which the previous methods of working for an organisation are transformed.

As pointed out by Jabłońska-Wołoszyn attracting and keeping employees is a huge challenge for an organisation, since employees are becoming more and more aware of their needs and raise high demands for employers [Jabłońska-Wołoszyn and Piotrowska-Trybull 2017]. At the same time public and private organizations wanting to achieve success need to realise

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that employees' potential is its essential determinant. Therefore, human resource management activities may significantly improve effectiveness of the armed forces and increase appeal of this organisation at the job market, which is especially significant in the context of resigning from obligatory conscription.

The human resources management in the armed forces source literature puts emphasis on the issues of: diagnosis of leadership cadre and general staff professional preparation [Tomaszewski 2016], ethical problems of actions by leaders and managers [Szulc and Mazurek 2012], improving the processes of human resource management in the Armed Forces [Jabłońska-Wołoszyn 2016], evolution of personal function in the armed forces [Sirko 2013], officers professional satisfaction [Majewski 2016], professional development of leadership cadre [Majewski 2013], cadre reconversion [Kościelecki 2010], the armed forces image politics [Kurek 2016], material conditions of professional soldiers [Orzyłowska 2010], role of the army at local job market [Sirko and Piotrowska-Trybull 2013]. There is no comprehensive approach to issues dealing with place and role of the armed forces at the modern job market, hence the author's intention to tackle this subject in this article.

In light of the above, the goal of the studies was to identify the armed forces' traits as an employer and to determine their meaning for soldiers and military employees.

When trying to identify traits of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland as an employer, references were made to the motives of taking up a job in the military, conditioned i.a. by images of the army, work and service conditions in this organisation, shaped under the influence of experiences and interests. Other sources of references were experiences of the soldiers and the army employees acquired through participation in actions of this organisation as the armed forces. The following research inquiry was assumed as the main issue: Which attributes make soldiers and the army employees see the AF RP as an employer at the modern job market and what is their significance for the surveyed?

To conduct the studies, the following research hypothesis was formulated: among the attributes that make soldiers and the army employees see the AF RP

as an employer a large significance is assigned to work stability, team work, high demands, professional challenges and mission-based actions. These attributes affect the appeal of the armed forces and potentially increase the interest in professional service and working for the army. Different significance of specific attributes depends on many variables, which include: belonging to a group (of soldiers or the army employees), job and service seniority, type of corps (soldiers), education, place of residence and post held.

Qualitative and quantitative methods allowed to achieve the goal and solve the research issue. Opinions of the soldiers and the army employees were obtained using the diagnostic survey method through a questionnaire, allowing to get a more thorough understanding and draw up a better description how the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland are perceived as an employer. The questionnaire was drawn using two measurement scales: nominal and ordinal. The closed questions ranking of the answers according to a given criterion (significance and degree of agreement with a statement) were predominant. Moreover, the questionnaire included half-opened questions with a possibility to fill in an answer by a respondent allowing to diversify the research material. The results were statistically significant at the level of $\alpha = 0.05$. Chi-squared test was used to verify the statistical hypotheses.

The pilot study was conducted by Piotrowska-Trybull et al. [2017] in two groups. The first one included 101 soldiers who participated in the courses of the War Studies University in March 2017. The second group included the soldiers on duty in the 11th Mazovian Artillery Regiment in Węgorzewo and military workers of this regiment, 145 respondents in total. The study in the second group was conducted at the verge of March and April 2017. Selection of the respondents was purposeful. In the case of the regiment, the size of sample: higher and lower ranking officers, non-coms and career privates was determined proportionately to their participation in the unit structure. Excel and Statistica were used to analyse the collected material.

The respondents included 36 women, 202 men, 8 study participants did not state their gender. As far as corps distribution is concerned, there were 70 higher ranking officers, 38 lower ranking officers, 33 non-coms, 80 career privates and 25 civilian employees (to

simplify the descriptions the army employees were also included among corps). Share of 47.1% of the participants held leadership and managerial posts. As far as job and service seniority in the military is concerned, the greatest number of respondents served and worked in the army for more than 16 years (40.6%), followed by 5–8 year tenures (22.4%) and the respondents with job seniority of up to 4 years – 16.6%. The respondents with 9–12 year seniority constituted 12.2%, whereas the number of persons within the range of 13–16 years of job seniority was the smallest. Most of the study participants had higher education 55.3%, followed by the secondary one – 27.2%, junior high – 6.5%, post-secondary – 5.3% and basic vocational – 2.4%.

MOTIVES FOR TAKING UP WORK IN THE ARMY

The study was initiated by specifying the motives viewed as an internal state of stimulus to take up action leading to satisfy a need [Koziański 2003], which were, to the highest extent, responsible for the respondents' decisions to select the armed forces as an employer. Their attributes, used as guidelines by the respondents when making decisions on starting up work or service in the army, indicate significant traits and values from the perspective of potential workers, worth to be strengthened and emphasised when competing over candidates on the job market.

The respondents paid highest attention to: employment certainty (81.3%), interest in the army (67.8%), possibility of promotion (63%), relatively high salary and other privileges (60.9%) – Table 1. It needs to be pointed out that the motive in the form of employment certainty when selecting an employer was also stressed in other studies [Piotrowska-Trybull 2016]. The less importance was applied to: the army financing courses and trainings improving professional development (57%) and possibility to check yourself in difficult situations and work in a team – 52% in both of the cases.

There was an average co-relation between the employment certainty variable and place of permanent residence [Góralski 1987]. The respondents in rural areas and in cities up to 50,000 citizens more often than others indicated that this motive was important or very important for them. A similar dependency was also found between employment certainty and education. Respondents with secondary and higher education stressed this motive as important and very important more often.

The variable of interest in the army as a motive of choosing the military service and work was co-related with acquiring knowledge and information on the army from books and web sites devoted to this subject, during the open days held by a military unit and from family members who serve or work in the army (average co-relation). Thus, independent knowledge

Table 1. Motives of taking up work in the army (respondents' replies in %)

Motives	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
Prestige of a military unit as an employer	53.25	15.45	15.04	8.54	4.07
Employment certainty	1.22	3.66	13.01	37.80	43.50
Possibility to check yourself in difficult/stressful situations	4.07	8.94	33.33	37.40	15.04
Possibility to work in a team/group	3.25	8.94	32.52	42.28	10.57
Financial support of professional development by a military institution	6.50	10.16	26.02	41.06	16.26
Chances for promotion	7.72	8.13	20.73	41.46	21.54
Relatively high salary and other privileges	8.54	6.91	22.76	39.84	21.14
Interest in the army	5.28	9.76	17.48	43.50	23.58
Family traditions	27.24	20.33	23.58	20.73	7.32
Chance	53.25	15.45	15.04	8.54	4.07

Scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 – unimportant; 2 – of little importance; 3 – of average importance; 4 – important; 5 – very important.

Source: Own study based on the conducted studies.

acquisition and contacts with persons involved in working for the army were significant channels to obtain information for such individuals. The least important motives when selecting the army as an employer were: prestige of a unit (67.8%), family traditions (47.5%) and chance (67.8%).

It is worth to underline that in the studied group the prestige of a military unit was seen as important and very important motive for selecting an employer by a small amount of respondents, however, the army is enjoying a good opinion in the public eyes. The results of 2015 studies by the Public Opinion Research Center (CBOS) show that 69% of Poles express positive opinions on the army and 4% – negative [CBOS 2015].

ATTRIBUTES OF THE ARMY AS AN EMPLOYER

To find out about the respondents' opinions on the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland as an employer and their attributes, the respondents were asked to rank specific categories regarding i.a.: manners and

instruments of motivating, possibility to strike balance between professional and personal life, professional development, preparation to carry out tasks and the skill set required to do so, cooperation with society and in international structures and being proud of belonging to the military formation.

The greatest number of the respondents, to a large and a very large extent, agreed with the statement that work in the army is stable and secures well-being of a family (73.5%). In turn, close to 11% of the surveyed disagreed with this statement or agreed with it only to a small extent. A relatively significant role of the army at a local job market, especially in smaller municipalities, is also confirmed by results of other studies [Sirko and Piotrowska-Trybull 2013].

In the context of job market and payment conditions (amount of remuneration and endowment) the respondents referred to the issues of their competitiveness in comparison to salaries in other professions. Around 49% of the surveyed agreed, to a large and a very large extent, with the statement that the army

Table 2. Army as an employer as viewed by the respondents (selected aspects in %)

Army attributes	Scale				
	1	2	3	4	5
Working for the army is stable – secures well-being of a family	2.44	8.54	15.04	45.93	27.64
The army raises high demands towards its employees/persons on duty	3.66	9.76	23.98	43.09	19.11
The army offers competitive remuneration in comparison to other professions	10.57	11.38	29.27	35.77	13.01
Work conditions in a military unit (material and non-material are attractive)	6.10	15.45	34.15	34.55	9.76
Working for a military unit allows to reconcile professional responsibilities with the domestic ones	8.54	23.17	28.05	28.46	11.38
Belonging to the army formation brings in the sense of pride	2.85	8.54	27.24	42.68	18.29
The army takes care of professional development its employees	12.60	15.04	34.96	29.27	7.72
Military institution employees/persons on duty are prepared to carry out tasks in international structures	6.50	25.20	38.21	24.39	5.28
Cooperation of the army with non-governmental organisations, authorities and citizens is crucial to build common welfare	3.25	6.50	28.86	41.46	19.92
Everyday work of a soldier/an employee is aimed at meeting the challenges faced by the army	2.85	11.79	36.59	35.77	13.01

Scale from 1 to 5, where: 1 – I do not agree; 2 – I agree to a small extent; 3 – I agree to an average extent; 4 – I agree to a large extent; 5 – I agree to a very large extent.

In some of the lines the values do not sum up to 100% due to the insufficiencies amounting from 0.41 to 1.21% in specific categories.

Source: As in Table 1.

offers competitive salary, in comparison to 11% declaring that they do not agree with the statement or agree with it only to a small extent.

There is an average co-relation between the remuneration competitiveness variable and the permanent place of residence variable ($R = 0.39$). The respondents coming from smaller towns more often agreed with the statement about the competitiveness of remuneration offered by the army. Moreover, there is an average co-relation ($R = 0.38$) between the variables remuneration competitiveness and job seniority and the strong co-relation between the variables remuneration competitiveness and the respondents belonging to specific corps ($R = 0.52$). The respondents with shorter tenures more often agreed, to a large extent, that salary in the army is competitive, whereas the respondents with longer tenures more often indicated that the level of remuneration competitiveness is average. When running an analysis of remuneration competitiveness in terms of corps represented by the respondents, it is worth to point out that the army employees disagreed with the statement that remuneration offered by the army is competitive compared to other professions or agreed with it to a small extent. At this point it is worth to note that although the level of remuneration in the army may be attractive at the beginning of work, it does not change essentially along the years of work, no matter its effectiveness. The higher and lower ranking officers the most often indicated that they agree with this statement to an average extent and the career privates more often underlined that they agree with it to a large and very large extent.

The respondents also assessed the conditions of work in a military unit, which are one of the essential elements affecting efficiency and involvement of the employees in work and exert an influence on evaluation of an employer. Referring to the motivating theory by Herzberg, work conditions are one of the hygiene factors, and their insufficient level is the source of dissatisfaction with job [Przybyła 2003]. Replies of the respondents regarding attractiveness of job conditions in a unit were analysed in terms of corps they represented and job seniority. The statement that job conditions in a unit are attractive was agreed with most often by the career privates, more than half of them declared that they agree with such a statement

to a large or a very large extent. Higher and lower ranking officers most often indicated that they agree with it to an average and to a large extent, while the non-coms – to a large extent. Contrary opinions were expressed by the army employees, with 64% of them declaring that they disagree with the statement or agree with it only to a small extent (strong co-relation $R = 0.50$) and when referring to job seniority, it is worth to point out that the soldiers and employees whose job tenure amounted up to 8 years most often indicated that they agree with the statement to an average and to a large extent. At the same time the respondents with job seniority of more than 16 years agreed with the statement to a large extent in 32% and to an average extent in 41 % (average co-relation $R = 0.32$).

Among the respondents 62% agreed, to a large and a very large extent, with the statement that the army raises high demands towards its employees and persons on duty. The variable of high demands towards employees and persons on duty was co-related with the variable of attractive job conditions in a military unit (average co-relation $R = 0.46$).

One of the factors deciding on whether a profession is perceived as attractive or not is the possibility to reconcile professional and domestic duties. This aspect is shaped by organisational solutions, including work time management resulting from complexity of specific tasks and their number and tools available at a job post. It is also affected by professional skills determining possibilities to carry out the assigned tasks within specific time frames, place, ensuring specific quality and using allocated resource. Among the respondents, close to 40% agreed, to a large and a very large extent, with the statement that the army creates conditions allowing reconciliation of professional and domestic duties, ca. 29% stated that they agree to an average extent, 23% to a small extent, and 8.5% disagreed.

Possibility to reconcile professional and domestic responsibilities was co-related with gender (average co-relation $R = 0.31$). More than half of women (64%) and 36% of men claimed that working/service in the military allows to reconcile these responsibilities. Altogether close to 40% of the respondents agreed, to a large and a very large extent, with a statement that working for the army makes it possible to maintain

life balance. It is also worth to emphasise that 16.6% of women and 33% of men stated that reconciliation of duties is possible to a small extent or impossible. A relatively high percentage of the surveyed claiming that the army does not create conditions allowing reconciliation of duties may result from the service nature i.a. working outside a place of residence, high availability requirement, tasks complexity.

Accounting for the conclusions from the studies formulated by Kieżun regarding the own work organisation by a manager [1997], the opinions on how soldiers and military employees at leadership/managerial posts reconcile their duties in comparison to persons occupying specialist and administrative positions were investigated into. In this case, there was a weak co-relation between the variables ($R = 0.29$). Among the persons at managerial posts, close to 30% stressed that reconciliation of responsibilities is impossible or possible to a small extent, another 33% claimed that it is possible to an average extent, and 27% declared that it is possible to a large and a very large extent. In the group of respondents with non-managerial posts 24% stressed that reconciliation of responsibilities is impossible or possible only to a small extent, 23% stated that it is possible to an average extent and more than half claimed that work and service in the army allows to reconcile their duties to a large and very large extent. Results of the studies allow to suppose that the persons at leadership and managerial posts find it slightly more difficult than other respondents to strike balance between career and private life. It is also worth to point out a co-relation between the variable of being employed in the army allows to reconcile responsibilities and job and service seniority ($R = 0.44$). Close to 60% of the respondents whose job seniority was up to 8 years stated that reconciling responsibilities is possible to a large and a very large extent. Whereas 17% the persons with more than 16 years of seniority gave such an answer and 47% stressed that it is impossible or possible only to a small extent – therefore, the longer the tenure in the army, the harder is to reconcile different responsibilities, which may be associated with the fact that the persons with more than 16 years of seniority occupy important posts and time-consuming positions, which may make it difficult to fulfil their responsibilities.

A co-relation was also found between the level of education and possibility to reconcile responsibilities ($R = 0.42$). Among the respondents with higher education 38% stressed that reconciling responsibilities is possible to a small extent, in comparison to 27% of those who claimed that it is possible to a large and very large extent. Whereas the respondents with junior-high and basic vocational education saw the possibility to reconcile these responsibilities to a small or very small extent, 18.7 and 0.0%, respectively. It may be assumed that the higher the education of soldiers and the army employees is, the more complex and numerous their tasks become, requiring them to devote more time for work and, at times, less time for families. Moreover, a co-relation was noted between the respondents' town size and opinions on possibility to reconcile professional and domestic responsibilities (average co-relation $R = 0.43$). The respondents from villages and towns of up to 20,000 citizens more often than others stressed that work in the army allows them to reconcile responsibilities to a large and very large extent, 64 and 46% respectively. The more populated the town of the respondents was, the more often they chose the answer – to a small or very small extent.

Another key issue in the context of employer's attractiveness is supporting development of employees. One of the forms of supporting development are the trainings, which bring qualified employees to an organisation, thus increasing its efficiency, and raising their self-esteem. As stressed by Majewski, in the case of soldiers professional development is not aimed at generating economic values, it rather "allows to achieve the assumed goals more effectively, making actions more beneficial in terms of praxeology" [2013]. Share of 37% of the respondent stated that the army takes care of professional development of its employees to a large and a very large extent, while close to 28% of the surveyed claimed the opposite and the remaining ones assessed this support as average.

When analysing responses of men and women, it is worth to notice that a similar percentage of them (27% in both groups) claimed that they disagree with this statement or agree with it only to a small extent. None of the women stated that the army takes care of

professional development to a very large extent and ca. 8.5% of men provided such an answer. In turn, taking into consideration the corps affiliation, it was discovered that the army employees (40%) more often than others declared that the army does not take care of their professional development or that it takes care of it only to a small extent. Non-coms split their opinions – 30% stated that the army takes care of their professional development to a small extent and 40% of them found this extent as large.

Higher and lower ranking officers and career privates most often chose the answer that the army takes care of soldiers' professional development to an average extent – 45.7, 39.4, 34.2% respectively. Opinions on the army taking care of professional development of its employees were co-related with job seniority (average co-relation $R = 0.34$). Among the respondents with 9–12 year tenure in the army, 60% claimed that the army takes care of professional development of employees to a large and a very large extent. A close, yet slightly lower, level of indications was noted among the respondents with job and service seniority spanning from 5 to 8 years (48%). Whereas the respondents with service seniority from 13 to 16 and over 16 years disagreed with this statement or agreed with it to a small extent – in 31 and 30% respectively. At the same time the share of statements that the army takes care of professional development to a large and a very large extent was 30 and 27%. Considering the above results, it is advisable to find out what is the manner and what are the tools of taking care of professional development of the cadre or what is the manner of emphasising the actions taken up in the army to counteract dissatisfaction. A balanced share of those who assess the army positively and negatively in this respect may lead to decisions of leaving the army, resulting in loss of knowledge and skills [Dziwniel and Wykrotka 2016]. Moreover, the results of studies indicate that ca. 27% of the respondents with higher education agree with this statement to a small or very small extent, and 40% claim that the army takes care of cadre development to an average extent.

It is worth to consider what makes the respondents feel proud from belonging to the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland. One of the possible answers is the awareness of working for the common well-being.

More than 60% of the surveyed agreed, to a large or very large extent, with the statement that cooperation of the army with non-governmental organisations, local authorities and citizens is crucial for generating common well-being – security – which is an overriding goal of human activity, determining conditions of life and development [Kuriata 2016]. Almost 10% of the respondents disagreed with this statement.

CONCLUSIONS

The results of the analyses allowed to draw up the attributes used by the study respondents in their perception of the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland as an employer. Preliminary significance of these attributes for the respondents was also determined, both at the stage of taking up jobs and service in the army and in association with experiences stemming from at least a-couple-of-year tenures in the AF RP. The hypothesis formulated in the introduction was verified positively with reference to the studied group. At the stage of selecting an employer and collecting work and service experience the following attributes were indicated as the ones important for the respondents and making the army stand out at the modern job market:

- job stability, which in the eyes of the surveyed plays an important role in ensuring the sense of security;
- professional challenges and high demands that enable professional development, competing rivalry and checking yourself in difficult situations;
- team work based on trust and shared responsibility of its members and belonging to the formation that gives the sense of pride;
- sense of a mission surfacing as striving to be useful in a society.

Other noteworthy attributes stressed by the respondents included: possibility to maintain balance between professional and private life, remuneration competitiveness, attractive job conditions, professional development support. Importance assigned to these attributes depended on work and service seniority, level of education, affiliation with a group of soldiers and the army employees. For instance, with reference to the trait of striking balance between professional

and private life opinions of the respondents depended on the types of posts held, participation in missions, education and gender of the respondents. Whereas the opinions on remuneration competitiveness were co-related with a place of respondent's residence, job seniority, affiliation with a group of the army employees or soldiers.

The above deliberations concern only the studied group. Their generalisation at the current stage of works is not possible, since this group is not representative. However, preliminary identification of dependencies is a stimulus for further studies dealing with role and place of the armed forces at the job market in the context of attributes making this organisation stand out and its attractiveness in comparison to other employers. It might also turn out useful at the stage of forming proposals of changes in the sphere of human resource management aimed at attracting valuable candidates to the organisation and to keep them in its ranks to ensure efficient performance of tasks by the armed forces.

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SIŁY ZBROJNE RZECZYPOSPOLITEJ POLSKIEJ JAKO PRACODAWCA NA WSPÓŁCZESNYM RYNKU PRACY W OPINII ŻOŁNIERZY I PRACOWNIKÓW

STRESZCZENIE

Siły Zbrojne Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej jako pracodawca konkurują na współczesnym rynku pracy o pracowników do służby zawodowej oraz wojska. Poszukiwanie oraz utrzymanie odpowiednio przygotowanego personelu ma umożliwić sprawną realizację przypisanych im zadań. W artykule zaprezentowano wybrane wyniki badania pilotażowego w zakresie postrzegania sił zbrojnych jako pracodawcy, przeprowadzonego z wykorzystaniem metody sondażu diagnostycznego. Celem badania było zidentyfikowanie atrybutów sił zbrojnych jako pracodawcy oraz określenie znaczenia tych atrybutów dla żołnierzy i pracowników cywilnych wojska. Wyniki badań wskazują, że do atrybutów, które wyróżniają wojsko jako pracodawcę, można zaliczyć: stabilność zatrudnienia, możliwości rozwoju zawodowego, zespołowość, wyzwania oraz wysokie wymagania wobec członków organizacji, stosunkowo wysokie wynagrodzenie, a także poczucie misji przejawiające się w dążeniu do bycia użytecznym w społeczeństwie.

Słowa kluczowe: atrybuty pracodawcy, rynek pracy, jednostki wojskowe