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# DIMENSIONS OF ATTRACTIVENESS OF THE POLISH ARMY AS AN EMPLOYER

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**Purpose:** The main objective of the conducted research was to identify the dimensions of attractiveness of the Polish Army as an employer in the opinion of candidates for military service.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The author of this article, noticing a gap in research results regarding the dimensions of attractiveness of the Polish Army as an employer, undertook a study to identify the dimensions (theoretical model) and empirically verify the model in one of the four target groups of employer branding in the Polish Army. The research using the diagnostic survey method (paper questionnaire) was conducted in November and December 2023 on a sample of 410 candidates for military service.

**Findings:** The study shows that all twelve dimensions of military attractiveness are important in the assessment of candidates for service, while the revealed statistical relationships between attractiveness factors and the level of attractiveness of the military had different strength of relationship, which suggests the possibility of creating a hierarchy of dimensions. According to the candidates, the most important dimensions of attractiveness of the military include the stabilization dimension, social dimension, financial dimension, working conditions and organization, and cultural-affiliation dimension.

**Research limitations/implications:** The research was conducted among candidates for military service, and therefore one of the four target groups of employer branding in the Polish Army was analyzed. As part of future research, it makes sense to learn the perspectives of the other three target groups, including soldiers, which will translate into the possibility of comparing the opinions of internal and external military stakeholders.

**Practical Implications:** The results of the research can provide a basis for improving promotional activities in the Polish Army by using in image activities the key attributes of the military most associated with the military by candidates for service. The indicated activity should translate into an assessment of the military as an employer that meets needs and expectations by creating favorable conditions for work and professional development.

**Originality/Value:** The article presents the author's dimension breakdown of the Polish Army attractiveness as an employer, which was then verified among candidates for military service.

Keywords: dimensions of attractiveness, employer branding, military, service candidates.

Category of the paper: research paper.

### 1. Introduction

Employer attractiveness is an issue analyzed multidimensionally by researchers who pay attention not only to the factors determining attractiveness, but also look for the causes and consequences of attractiveness, the diagnosis of which allows a more complete understanding of human behavior in the work environment and labor market (in the context of professional choices, career path, etc.). Addressing the issue of attractiveness, the authors base their research on both existing and commonly used divisions of factors, as well as create their own concepts, which are subjected to empirical verification and are the basis for accepting or rejecting research hypotheses. Taking into account the available research results, it was noticed that the attractiveness of an organization as an employer is mainly analyzed in relation to organizations from the business community. Only a few publications on public organizations are available, which served as an inspiration to undertake research in this area, with the aim of indicating the dimensions of the attractiveness of a public organization as an employer, and thus showing the specifics of a public employer. Taking into account the diversity of public organizations, attention was focused on one of the largest public employers in Poland – the Polish Army. The main objective of the research conducted was to identify the dimensions of the military's attractiveness as an employer. The article presents the results of verification of the adopted distribution of attractiveness dimensions among potential candidates for military service, and therefore in relation to one of the four target groups of employer branding in the Polish Army.

The purpose of the research translated into the structure of this article, in which, after discussing the essence of the attractiveness of the organization as an employer and citing key areas of ongoing research in the field of attractiveness, attention was devoted to the dimensions of attractiveness of the military as an employer. The dimensions emerged on the basis of an in-depth analysis of the literature on the subject and the results of empirical research that the author of the publication has been conducting since 2016. Attractiveness factors were assigned to the emerged dimensions, which were then subjected to research. The second part of the article describes the research methodology and presents the results. The article concludes with a summary along with recommendations for further research.

## 2. Employer attractiveness – literature review

Organizations capable of competing for talent in the labor market, and therefore attracting the most valuable employees, as well as having the ability to retain them in their ranks, are referred to as attractive employers. The attractiveness of an organization is variously defined by researchers, with some authors pointing out that it is a force of attraction (Collins, Kanar, 2013; Black, van Esch, 2021) created as a result of evaluating the way the organization functions, the working conditions and the terms and conditions of employment. In the definitions, attention is focused either on how employees perceive the organization as the best place to work, or on attractiveness factors – dimensions of attractiveness, the value of which, assessed subjectively, affects attitudes toward the organization. Attractiveness can thus be put, following Berthon, Ewing and Hah, as "the anticipated benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a particular organization" (2005, p. 156), with the researchers' approach to how attractiveness is defined referring only to attractiveness in the internal dimension, leaving out the all-important external aspect. Where internal attractiveness refers to how employees perceive the organization as an attractive employer, external attractiveness is related to the perception of the organization as a potential – valuable place to work by job candidates (Pingle, Sharma, 2013). It is reasonable to emphasize the relationship of a bilateral nature between the two dimensions of attractiveness - both internal attractiveness translates into external attractiveness, and attractiveness in the perception of external stakeholders influences the way current employees evaluate attractiveness. The relationship shown makes it possible to infer the importance of employer branding activities in the two areas indicated.

The way of studying attractiveness in the two dimensions analyzed differs from each other, which is related to the difference in information and perception of the organization's stakeholders. Deepening the analysis of the dimensions, it is reasonable to further divide it taking into account the category of the organization's stakeholders, because in the external dimension, a different way of assessing the attractiveness of the organization may be presented by potential candidates, former participants in the recruitment and selection processes, or people involved in the recruitment process, and therefore with a wider range of knowledge about the organization.

The attractiveness of an organization as an employer is analyzed using a scale by, among others, Berthon et al. (2005), which was created taking into account the dimensions of employer attractiveness distinguished by Ambler and Barrow (1996). The authors pointed out the importance of psychological, functional and economic dimensions in the process of assessing the attractiveness of an organization as an employer. Thus, the research conducted is concerned with the subjective image that is formed in the mind of employees as a result of valuing the characteristics and attributes of the organization. With the passage of time, more and more researchers analyze five dimensions/values, such as interest value, social value, economic value, development and application value. The aforementioned division in 2017 was supplemented by Dabirian, Kietzmann and Diba with two more dimensions, such as management values (management values refer to the behavior of supervisors at work that determines employee retention and the quality of social relationships) and work life balance (Dabirian et al., 2017). An in-depth analysis of the literature on the subject also points to other extensions of the scale by, for example, Roy (2008) and Arachchige and Robertson (2013).

Researchers addressing the issue of organizational attractiveness focus their attention not only on the dimensions themselves, but also on the analysis of the relationship of attractiveness with employee behavior in the work environment, including the attitudes displayed. In many cases, the analyses conducted concern a specific type of organization, including companies operating, for example, in the IT industry, which does not fully allow the translation of research results to employee behavior in other organizations, given the specifics of the industry.

In order to introduce the areas of ongoing research in the area of factors of attractiveness of organizations as employers, the following part of the article cites selected research results, which at a later stage served as the basis for distinguishing the dimensions of attractiveness of employers – public institutions.

Analyzing the available research results, it can be pointed out that as early as in 1990, Kahn emphasized that trusting relationships between employees increase employees' psychological security and motivation, as well as reduce the level of stress associated with their roles (Kahn, 1990). In 2001, Bergstrom and Anderson stressed the impact of employee behavior on an organization's ability to attract talent (Bergstrom, Anderson, 2001). In 2006, Schaufeli, Bakker and Salanova underlined the role of co-workers in shaping work engagement. The importance of employee retention as an important aspect of organizational performance and the need to study the opinions of current employees – their perspectives on their willingness to engage with the organization for a longer period of time – was shown in 2008 by Neethi and Misra. In the same year, Vandenberghe and Tremblay revealed that the relationship between the employee and the organization, as well as satisfaction with compensation and benefits, plays a key role in employee retention (2008), while Davis emphasized the importance of an employer's internal image as a factor that enhances an organization's ability to develop loyalty and build an emotional connection (2008). The importance of the internal perspective in ongoing research on employer branding (EB) has been emphasized by Ready et al. (2008), Tanwar and Prasad (2017), as well as Maxwell and Knox (2009). The need to study the relationship between EB and employment, attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment, and a focus on employees as internal customers was pointed out by Love and Singh, with the researchers emphasizing the importance of signals sent to job candidates reinforced by the behaviors and attitudes of employees and recruiters (2011). Analyzing the subsequent publications, the work of Priyadarshi, who emphasized the importance of four factors of employer attractiveness, such as career, organizational reputation and flexibility, organizational environment, work diversity and work environment (2011), draws attention. Opportunities for career advancement were also emphasized in the study by Arachchige and Robertson, showing that employees prefer to work in an organization where they have opportunities for career advancement and promotion (2013). The importance of benefits, communication standards, corporate identity system, employee feedback and technology channels in assessing EB quality in IT organizations was illustrated in a study by Neha and Kamalanabhan (2014). Rampl emphasized the importance of work content and work culture

(2014), while Stobbeleir et al. highlighted career development opportunities, work content, social environment and financial value as important internal branding factors determining retention of current employees in the organization (2016). Another dimension of employer attractiveness can be seen in the research of Ilyas, Shaari and Alshuaibi, who pointed out that work-life balance is a factor that helps an organization strengthen its employer brand, leads to engagement and retention of talent in the organization (2018). Similar insights are evident in the work of Chi, Saldamli and Gursoy (2021), in which the researchers emphasized that implementing WLB solutions helps employees integrate work and personal life (2021). The attractiveness of an organization as an employer has also been linked to corporate social responsibility (CSR) (Carlini et al., 2019). Bharadway and Yameen emphasized the importance of a well-designed CSR strategy as a tool to help build an organization's reputation as a desirable place to work among current as well as future employees (2021), while Klimkiewicz and Oltra looked for a link between CSR and organizational attractiveness in the context of generational affiliation (2017).

The cited research results illustrate the evolution of approaches to organizational attractiveness, including allowing us to conclude that over time the basic dimensions of attractiveness remain partially unchanged, but are constantly supplemented by new aspects, which is related to the very evolution of work, working conditions and tools, as well as changes in the needs of employees.

# 3. Dimensions of military attractiveness

Despite the identification of more and more new determinants of an organization's attractiveness as an employer, one can constantly find in the literature research conducted on the basic dimensions (Dabirian et al., 2019). These include both salary, health benefits, holiday subsidies, alternative incentives, free food, etc. Yousf and Khurshid emphasize the value of competitive compensation as a factor that provides a competitive advantage, conditioning attitudes and behavior at work (2021), while Poloski Vokić, Tkalac Vercic and Sincic Coric show the importance of strategic communication in internal employer branding. Researchers emphasize that an employer's attractiveness depends in part on the quality of internal communication and the resulting satisfaction of employees. Indeed, according to research, employees who are satisfied with internal communication perceive their employers as more attractive (2023).

The three basic dimensions of an organization's attractiveness as an employer, as distinguished by Ambler and Barrow (1996), which include the psychological, functional and economic dimensions, should be expanded, which is due to the multifaceted nature of employees' needs and expectations, as well as changes in the way and form of work provision.

This is because analyzing only the financial, developmental or task-competency dimensions does not allow a full understanding of the reasons for the attractiveness of employers, constituting a limitation in the process of inference in terms of the measures that an organization should implement to increase its power of attraction.

Taking into account the cited research results, as well as the classical dimensions, twelve dimensions of organizational attractiveness were identified, which was conditioned by the desire to pay attention to those areas that, in the case of public organizations, may be important in building attractiveness. The dimensions distinguished were:

- financial (level of pay, benefits),
- psychosocial (level of danger of the work performed, stressfulness of work),
- individual (development of interests through work, performance of work that gives satisfaction),
- legal and informational (employer's compliance with employment regulations, frequency of changes to these regulations),
- developmental (opportunity for professional development in the institution, support for development outside the institution),
- social (prestige of the profession, social position, respect for the profession),
- familial (family tradition related to the profession, family pressure),
- educational (compatibility of the learned profession with the job offer, the time required to acquire qualifications for the job),
- task-competitive (content of work performed, scope of tasks to be performed),
- work organization and physical working conditions (time of work provision, flexibility of working hours, mode of work performance),
- cultural-affiliative (work atmosphere, support of superiors),
- stabilization (pension entitlements, stability of employment).

Considering the way of analyzing the indicated dimensions of attractiveness, attention should be directed to typical scales for studying attractiveness, in which the authors, after distinguishing the dimensions of attractiveness, in the next step assign attractiveness factors to the dimensions (usually taking the form of statements evaluated using a Likert scale). The above approach was also applied during the conducted research, which made it possible to identify important dimensions of the military's attractiveness in the opinion of candidates for service.

## 4. Results of empirical research

## 4.1. Own research methodology and sample structure

Empirical research aimed at identifying dimensions of the attractiveness of the military as an employer in Poland was conducted in November and December 2023 on a sample of 410 candidates for military service. The selection of the research sample was purposive (non-probabilistic, not random selection), as the research covered civilian students of civil-military universities (first and second degree students pursuing full-time and part-time studies in the following majors: management and command, logistics, aviation, internal security, international security and diplomacy, national security and defense, information security and cyber security, administration). The primary criterion for taking part in the research was a declaration of intent to apply for service in the Polish Army in the long or near future. The research was carried out using the method of diagnostic poll utilizing the survey technique (paper version). The survey questionnaire contained 28 questions, and for the purposes of this article only a portion of the research results is presented, i.e. the part devoted to the dimensions of attractiveness of the military in the opinion of candidates for military service. This article shows the first part of the results of the research conducted on 20 attractiveness factors assigned to 12 dimensions.

The main research problem was formulated in the form of the question: What dimensions determine the attractiveness of the military as an employer in Poland in the opinion of candidates for service?

In turn, the specific problems took the form of questions:

- 1. How do service candidates assess the attractiveness of the military as an employer?
- 2. What dimensions of the attractiveness of the military as an employer can be distinguished?
- 3. What factors determine the attractiveness of the military as an employer in the opinion of service candidates?

For the purposes of the research conducted, the following research hypothesis was adopted: The attractiveness of the Polish Army as an employer in the target group of candidates for military service is determined by factors assigned to the following dimensions: financial, psychosocial, individual, legal and informational, developmental, social, family educational, task-competence, work organization and physical working conditions, cultural-affiliation and stabilization.

The structure of the research sample is shown in Table 1.

**Table 1.** *Structure of the research sample* 

Criterion	Responses	N	%
Gender of respondents	Female	158	38.54
	Male	252	61.46
Education	Secondary	283	69.02
	Higher	127	30.98
Age	18-25	373	90.98
	26-30	21	5.12
	31-34	7	1.71
	35-40	6	1.46
	41-44	1	0.24
	45-49	2	0.49
Place of residence	village	81	19.76
	city with up to 19,999 inhabitants	47	11.46
	city with 20,000 to 49,999 inhabitants	49	11.95
	city with 50,000 to 99,999 inhabitants	39	9.51
	city with 100,000 to 499,999 inhabitants	19	4.63
	cities with more than 500,000 inhabitants	175	42.68

Source: own results of research.

38.54% of women and 61.46% of men participated in the survey. They were largely aged up to 25 years (90.89%), with secondary education (69.02%) and higher education (30.98%). Respondents resided mainly in cities with more than 500,000 residents (42.68%), as well as in rural areas (19.76%). The majority of respondents had work experience of up to 5 years (58.29%). In addition, an analysis of the structure of the survey sample revealed that 19.8% of respondents had attended uniformed classes, 3.41% had applied for military service at the time of the survey, 7.56% had participated in military recruitment in the past, and 0.98% of respondents had applied for a civilian position in the military. 11.46% of respondents have completed NSR or Academic Legion training, for example, 2.68% belong to the Rifle Association, 15.61% of respondents were family members of a soldier/former soldier. Respondents also indicated that they were currently working in a non-military organization (20.98%), with the remaining respondents having only student status.

## 4.2. Factors of attractiveness of the military – opinions of respondents

Verification of the relationship between the dimensions of employer attractiveness and the attractiveness of the organization required, during the course of the research, acquiring data on the level of attractiveness of the military, the dimensions of attractiveness relevant to respondents and decisive for their choice of employer, and the factors of attractiveness of the military as an employer, which were linked to the dimensions of attractiveness. Analyzing the level of attractiveness of the military in revealed that rather high and definitely high levels were declared by a total of 45.97% of respondents. A medium level was marked by 35.45% of respondents, and 18.58% indicated low attractiveness (despite declaring a desire to apply for military service).

Focusing attention on the dimensions of attractiveness, most respondents indicated that the financial dimension was rather important and definitely important to them (96.07%), followed

by stabilization (87.93%), developmental (86%), individual (85.22%), cultural-affiliation (81.73%), legal (76.11%), task-competence (73.71%). Respondents paid less attention to the psychosocial (68.72%), social (65.61%), educational (55.91%) dimensions. 35.22% of respondents indicated the relevance of the family dimension, related to the continuation of family traditions associated with work in the profession, and only 2.46% considered the dimension of work organization and physical working conditions as important. The revealed result can be explained by the specificity of the studied group, i.e. people declaring their intention to join the army, who should be aware of the conditions and hardships of service, while the non-attribution of importance to this dimension may also be due to the stage at which the respondents were (candidates for service, not employees).

At a further stage of the research conducted, attention was focused on the factors of attractiveness of the military as an employer. The existence of statistical relationships between 20 attractiveness factors and the level of attractiveness of the military as an employer was analyzed. In order to verify the relationship between the indicated variables, a series of analyses were performed using Spearman's rank correlation method. Non-parametric analysis was chosen because the assumption of normality of the distributions of the results in the analyzed variables was not met. The existence of statistically significant relationships of varying strength of association was confirmed for all analyzed relationships (Table 2).

**Table 2.** *Relationships between attractiveness factors and level of attractiveness* 

Attractiveness factors	Spearman's Rho	Dimensions of attractiveness	
Form of employment offered	0.335	Stabilization	
Amount of military pension	0.335	Stabilization	
Social esteem for the profession	0.320	Social	
Diversity of employee benefits	0.310	Salaries	
Conditions of the work performed	0.306	Work organization and physical working conditions	
The amount of wages offered	0.305	Financial	
Work atmosphere	0.305	Cultural-affiliative	
Content of the work performed	0.300	Task-competitive	
Ability to maintain work-life balance	0.290	Family	
General image of the military	0.272	Social	
Reconversion*	0.269	Stabilization	
Opportunity to help other people	0.267	Social	
Support from superiors	0.267	Cultural-affiliative	
Continuous improvement of competencies	0.236	Developmental	
Flexibility of working hours	0.227	Work organization and physical working conditions	
Transparency of career path	0.224	Developmental	
Amount of free time after work	0.219	Family	
Possibility of early retirement	0.196	Stabilization	
Stability of employment	0.183	Stabilization	
Family traditions related to military service	0.155	Family	

<sup>\*</sup>Reconversion: projects undertaken for soldiers discharged and released from military service and also for family members of soldiers in the field of retraining, career counseling, job placement and apprenticeships, aimed at preparing those eligible for employment. p < 0.005

Source: own results of research.

Focusing attention on the strength of the relationship between variables, statistically moderate strength was detected for the form of employment offered and the amount of military pension (0.335), the prestige of the military as a place of work (0.330), social esteem for the profession (0.320), a variety of employee benefits (0.310), the conditions of the work performed (0.306), the work atmosphere and the amount of wages offered (0.305). Thus, the distinguished factors are significant variables determining the attractiveness of the military as an employer. Assigning the indicated variables to the dimensions of attractiveness, it can be seen that they relate to the stabilization dimension, social dimension, financial dimension, work conditions and organization, and cultural and affiliation dimension, thus constituting the key dimensions of attractiveness of the military as an employer in the opinion of candidates for military service. Respondents, indicating the dimensions of employer attractiveness that are important in their opinion, as well as the factors of attractiveness of the military, clearly indicated that the military derives its attractiveness from offering opportunities to meet the key needs of candidates, which are mainly related to the financial and stabilization dimensions, with the other dimensions also influencing the attractiveness of the military, however to a lesser extent.

#### 4.3. Discussion

The referenced research results enabled positive verification of the adopted research hypothesis. The attractiveness of the Polish Army as an employer in the target group of candidates for military service is determined by factors assigned to the following dimensions: financial, psychosocial, individual, legal and informational, developmental, social, family educational, task-competence, work organization and physical working conditions, cultural-affiliation and stabilization. These factors determine the attractiveness of the military to varying degrees, which illustrates the internal diversity of the military's stakeholders who are candidates for military service.

The analysis of the results of the obtained research in the group of candidates for military service leads us to believe in the legitimacy of implementing in the promotional and information activities in the army activities aimed at effective promotion of the army as a workplace, with particular emphasis on highlighting in promotional campaigns and actions the key dimensions of the attractiveness of the service. Emphasizing dimensions that are relevant to candidates will help reinforce their belief that the military is a space where they have the opportunity to meet their key needs, and is therefore an attractive and promising employer. Incorporating key dimensions into the military's employee value proposition (EVP) will help maintain consistency in messages and distinguish the military as an employer in the market, both in the security organization sector and in the general labor market. The legitimacy of changes in the EVP of the military can be supported by the level of competitiveness of organizations other than security institutions that compete with the military for employees with a certain competence profile. The military, in order to distinguish itself as an employer in the market, should not only emphasize in campaigns the importance of patriotism and service, but also accentuate the

modernity of the military, the possibility of professional development also after military service through the use of solutions offered by reconversion, and the social esteem for the profession of soldier, which makes military service prestigious and socially important.

## 5. Summary

The attractiveness of the military as a public employer in Poland is an important issue that affects Poles' sense of security. Attractive employers, by offering opportunities to meet key needs, are effective in attracting the most valuable candidates, while increasing the potential of the organization. Candidates, when deciding to apply for a specific position, analyze attractiveness factors, with attention focused on the ability to group these factors. The ability to identify dimensions that are relevant from the perspective of candidates for service in the military is an important issue both from the perspective of the process of managing the image of the military and building the prestige of the service. The research shows that the most important dimensions of the military's attractiveness as an employer include the stabilization dimension, social dimension, financial dimension, working conditions and organization, and the cultural-affiliation dimension. The indicated dimensions result from the specific benefits offered to soldiers, and constitute the competitiveness of the military in the market, while determining the military's power of attraction.

Subjecting the results of the study to detailed analysis, it can be seen that all the analyzed dimensions translate into the attractiveness of the military as an employer, while the strength of the relationship between the variables varied. This indicates the diverse needs of candidates for service, who do not constitute a homegeneous group, but a heterogeneous one. The diversity of the group of candidates in terms of expectations illustrates the need to thoroughly understand this group of stakeholders and profile promotional activities under their needs.

This article shows the results obtained during the study of candidates for military service, and therefore research conducted among only one of the four target groups of employer branding activities in the Polish Army (an important limitation). It is reasonable to conduct surveys among the other three groups and compare the results, which will enable understanding of the military's stakeholders and matching the identified needs of promotional activities. It should only be emphasized that the range of factors to be analyzed during the study in each military target group will vary, based on the level of knowledge of military stakeholders.

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