

Motivation of Men and Women to Join the Armed Forces

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Abstract: The armed forces are traditionally the domain of men, however, in recent decades this trend has changed slightly - there has also been an interest from the women's side in entering the field of the national defence. The article is based on the practice of the Czech Armed Forces, where the representation of women has been relatively stable for many years - around 13%. The purpose of the article was to find out how significantly selected factors reflecting the specifics of the military profession motivate young men and women to join the army, and on the contrary, discourage them from doing so. The aim was then to identify whether there are differences between motivational aspects of men and women. The data was obtained in the form of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was completed by 179 respondents – the first-year military students of the University of Defence, the only military institution of higher education of the Czech Armed Forces. No statistically significant difference was found between the motivation of men and women based on their perception of financial evaluation, employee benefits and position of the Czech Armed Forces in society. However, for several factors notable differences were recorded. Participation in foreign military missions, working with military technology, working in the field, interest in history and interest in warfare play more important role in motivation to join the army for male soldiers than for female soldiers, while women are proven to be motivated by interpersonal relations more than men. Moreover, in relation to aspects causing demotivation from joining the army, female soldiers tend to be discouraged by risk of injury, risk of loss of life, possibility of being sent to a foreign military operation and fear of bullying much more than male soldiers.

Keywords: Motivation, Army, Military, Czech Armed Forces, Female soldier, Male soldier

1. Introduction

The army is a stereotypically masculine organization including aspects traditionally attributed to men – strength, combativeness, courage, work in the field with weapons etc. However, this organization transforms in the context of culture and time. Before 1970's, more than one-third of women in the forces served as nurses or in other health-related positions. Since 1973, the percentage of military positions open to women has increased and in the 21st century, more than 90% of military occupations are now available for/to women (Nathan et al., 2016).

The number of women in the armed forces is increasing in the world's major armies, although relatively slowly. The barriers to women's entry into the military are weakening. Numerous organizations (UN, NATO etc.) have stated in their official documents (Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action) that the inclusion of women in all the spheres of society is essential for attaining peace and economic and social development (Rokvić, Stanarević, 2016). The mentioned platform was also adopted by the Ministry of Defence of the Czech Republic (Defence ministry action plan to implement UN Security Council Resolution 1325, on Women, Peace and Security, 2015).

The Czech Armed Forces (CAF) have been professional since 2005 (Pernica, 2007). Currently, the size of the MoD is a total of 35 127 employees, of which 27 000 are soldiers (2021). Although the representation of women is slowly increasing, the representation of women in the CAF is currently 13.7%. Only 2 women (5%) of the CAF are in the position of general and 9 women (3%) in the rank of colonel (Quantitative gender analysis MoD, 2022). It confirms the gender concepts that prove women are usually not a part of top management of organizations (Bourdieu, 2001). One of the reasons is the fact that women aim their choice of study towards a profession that is characterized by regular working hours, which is less time-consuming and does not require excessive physical fitness or work in the field (Hřebíček, 2006).

Formally, the situation in the armed forces within the framework of achieving gender equality is gradually improving, and is being reflected by the armies of NATO member states. However, the question remains how the higher engagement of women in the armed forces manifests itself in practice. One of the key questions that can stand at the beginning of knowledge about the role of women in the military is the investigation of the motivation of women (and men) to join the armed forces.

The aim of the research is to find out how significantly selected factors reflecting the specifics of the military profession:

- motivate men and women to join the Czech Armed Forces.
- discourage men and women from joining the Czech Armed Forces.

The research question of the paper can be formulated as follows:

Are there any differences between the motivational aspects of men and women to join the Czech Armed Forces?

2. Theoretical Background

Motivation can be defined in different ways and refers to the forces either within or external to a person that arouse enthusiasm and persistence to pursue a certain course of action (Daft et al., 2010). The motivational tools can be categorized, e.g. to job evaluation, social conditions, material conditions and job characteristics (Blažek, 2011).

A person's decision to join the military is complex and is commonly motivated by a number of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Ginexi et al., 1994). Pliske et al. (1986) define six distinct motivational factors of recruits of the US Army - self-improvement, economic advancement, military service, time out, travel and money for education (confirmed by Gade and Elig 1986).

The conclusions of the Bulgarian study (2018) involving a total of 348 military personnel show that the main factors for choosing the military career are the opportunity for an early retirement, the salary, certainty and predictability at the workplace, opportunities for improvement and a career development. The further factors are appropriate working time, obtaining free education and opportunities to work with weapons and military equipment. Patriotic motives are also important, as well as the opportunity for teamwork and participation in foreign missions. Then the social status of the military profession and the benefits arising from it are also indicated as notable/important (Grigorov, Spirdonov 2018).

The data of other interviews with new recruits revealed the following motivational aspects to join the army - historical interest, self-improvement, job/skill training, money for education, floundering and time out (Ginexi et al., 1994). Another study shows that young people join the military for material reasons, but also for value-oriented reasons (duty to country, self-discipline etc.) (Eighmey, 2006). Similar findings were confirmed by Woodruff, Kelty and Segal (2006) - intrinsic values such as patriotism and desire to serve play a key role in the decision-making process to join the armed forces. For 52 American and 11 Bulgarian servicemen, the most important factors for choosing a military career were participation in missions and an opportunity to serve their country, then career opportunities, opportunities to work with weapons and military equipment, free education, teamwork and work in an international environment (Grigorov, 2020).

Let us now move on to the results of the survey, which focused on examining of women in the military. Females are less likely to serve in combat and they are more likely to have never been deployed away from their permanent duty station (Nathan et al., 2016). A similar conclusion is declared in the Czech Republic environment - there are positions in the army that are still forbidden to women (for example in special units). The reason is an extremely demanding deployment and hard training (Hřebíček, 2016). Women cannot fully perform some military activities due to morphological and functional differences (e.g. they achieve 60-85% of men's values in speed endurance or strength performances, but their agility performance is 106% of men's) (Havlíčková, 2003). The frequency of injuries because of reconnaissance training in the American and British armies is twice as high for women as for men (Suchý, 2006). On the other side, numerous surveys have confirmed that the presence of women improves the effectiveness of armed forces, especially in the field of peacekeeping missions and in terms of civil-military cooperation. There is an increasing evidence that non-combat missions are best served by a better gender mix (Groothedde, Stephanie, 2013, cited by Rokvić, Stanarević, 2016).

As for the motivation of female members of the army, the key conclusions of the previous research are as follows. In the interviews with 18 military respondents, it was found that women joined the military for financial stability, job training, education, and employment opportunities (Mankowski, 2015). The first research, included among other areas, the motivation of women to join the Czech professional army, was carried out in 2006. The conclusions were as follows - women were more often influenced by assumed social security (salary, health care, social security). An important reason for joining the army was the fact that their partners worked in the military. For men, this reason is secondary. For them, instead of social guarantees, the essential motivation is to do something for the security of their country, and more often than women, they wanted to be soldiers since childhood (Hřebíček, 2006). Another survey showed that for women, economic

benefits dominate for entering as well as for continuing to stay in the service. Furthermore, self-realization plays an important role too, as well as the possibility of the career growth (Ďurechová, 2012).

There have not been done many surveys of the motivation to join the armed forces, based on the gender structure. All in all, the aforementioned surveys show that women are motivated to join the military especially by economic benefits, self-development aspects, job security, the career growth, but also by the fact that they have a partner in the army. A certain gender-based division of labour in the military is still evident, where women mainly perform administrative positions.

3. Data and Methods

With regard to the aim, the research was set in a quantitative paradigm. The questionnaire survey appears to be the most effective data collection technique for this purpose. Data collection was carried out in October 2022. The questionnaire survey was processed using a self-constructed technique. The target population consisted of the first-year military students of the Faculty of Military Leadership (FML) of the University of Defence (UoD), the only military institution of higher education of the Czech Armed Forces (CAF). The validity of the questionnaire was verified in a pre-survey conducted among selected military students of the UoD during June 2022.

The questionnaires were distributed in a printed form. The respondents were motivated to complete the questionnaire by the personal presence of the researchers. It was therefore possible to ask for additional information if necessary, and it ensured a return rate of 100%. The results are thus representative of the population of the first-year military students of FML, UoD.

179 respondents - 21 % women and 79 % men - were interviewed. 97 % of the respondents were 19 - 22 years old, 3 % of them were older. 93% of the respondents had never been a member of the CAF before, 7% were graduates of Military High School.

The importance of motives for the career choice was measured by a 28-item closed-ended battery of motivational factors with responses on the Likert scale of insignificant, rather insignificant, rather significant and very significant. These factors were created based on content analysis of resources related to motivation both in general and in military environment, on the results of brainstorming session with five soldiers and 35 UoD students and the results of the "Motivation to join the CAF" study of The General Staff of the CAF, which interviewed 2 229 recruits in 2018.

These factors can be classified in 5 groups:

1. financial evaluation (salary, retirement allowance, a cultural and social needs fund, housing/food allowance);
2. employee benefits (preventive rehabilitation, medical care, discounts on certain products, company kindergartens);
3. work itself (sports activities, participation in missions, working with weapons / military technology, working in the field, the career growth, adventurous activities, emphasis on physical readiness, interpersonal relations, security of employment, order and discipline);
4. position of the army in society (service to the country, representation of the Czech Republic, meaningfulness and usefulness of military service for society, a current security situation in the world);
5. personal interests (family tradition, compliance with army values, interest in history, interest in warfare).

A second battery of following 10 demotivational factors was created to analyse what, on the contrary, discouraged the respondents from joining the CAF: the necessity of subjecting oneself to discipline, risk of injury, risk of loss of life, the possibility of being sent to a mission, the necessity to maintain physical condition, wearing a uniform, fear of bullying, restriction of certain rights and enlistment for 10 or more years. The questionnaire enabled the respondents to indicate the level of significance of these demotivational factors using a modified Likert scale: very discouraging, slightly discouraging, not discouraging fundamentally, not discouraging at all.

Research Ethics: The purpose and aim of the research, handling of the completed questionnaires, including full assurance of anonymity, were explained in detail to all the research participants prior to data collection.

To find out the differences between men and women in their motivational aspects for joining the CAF, the data from the questionnaire survey were analysed using contingency tables and performing chi-square tests of independence with the use of SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) version 22. The procedure of the chi-square tests of independence included six steps: formulation of null hypothesis (H_0 = there is no statistical difference between men and women) and alternative hypothesis (H_A = there is a statistical difference between men and women), selection of a level of significance α , calculation of the chi square statistic (χ^2), calculation of the degrees of freedom (df), selection of the critical chi-square value, comparison of the chi square statistic χ^2 to the critical chi-square value and acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis.

4. Results

Based on the quantification of the Likert scale for the category of motivational factors, the overall order of significance of the factors for all respondents were determined (see the numbers in brackets beside each motivational factor in Table 1 – Table 5). Tables 1 – 5 also show the relative frequencies of responses of all the respondents, separately of women and men and results of the chi-square test. For the purposes of maintaining the simplicity of the tables, the four scales were merged in two - insignificant and significant factors.

Table 1: Motivational Factors – Financial Evaluation

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Salary (15.)				
Insignificant	6%	21%	22%	0.129
Significant	94%	76%	78%	0,937
Retirement allowance (16.)				
Insignificant	25%	24%	26%	2.359
Significant	75%	76%	74%	0.307
Cultural and social needs fund (23.)				
Insignificant	59%	50%	62%	4.021
Significant	41%	50%	38%	0.134
Housing allowance (19.)				
Insignificant	46%	40%	47%	0.802
Significant	54%	60%	53%	0.670
Food allowance (20.)				
Insignificant	45%	45%	44%	0.394
Significant	55%	55%	56%	0.821

The factors of financial evaluation have an average importance for the respondents. In the overall ranking of significance, they range between the fifteenth and the twentieth place. For all the factors from the financial evaluation category, the null hypotheses are not rejected. No statistically significant difference was found between the motivation of men and women based on these factors.

Table 2: Motivational Factors – Employee Benefits

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Preventive rehabilitation (25.)				
Insignificant	69%	63%	71%	1.067
Significant	31%	37%	29%	0.587
Medical care (24.)				
Insignificant	65%	60%	66%	0.392
Significant	35%	40%	34%	0.822

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Discounts on products (26.)				
Insignificant	31%	75%	77%	3.988
Significant	69%	35%	23%	0.136
Company kindergartens (28.)				
Insignificant	89%	86%	89%	3.381
Significant	11%	14%	11%	0.184

The employee benefits are the least important category for the motivational purpose. For all the factors from the employee benefits category, the null hypotheses were not rejected. No statistically significant difference was found between the motivation of men and women based on these factors.

Table 3: Motivational Factors – Work Itself

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Sport activities during working hours (8.)				
Insignificant	11%	13%	10%	2.017
Significant	89%	87%	90%	0.365
Participation in missions (14.)				
Insignificant	30%	47%	25%	11.751
Significant	70%	53%	75%	0.003**
Working with weapons (11.)				
Insignificant	21%	19%	21%	4.976
Significant	79%	81%	79%	0.083
Working with military technology (10.)				
Insignificant	23%	37%	19%	9.749
Significant	77%	63%	81%	0.008**
Working in the field (5.)				
Insignificant	18%	32%	15%	9.589
Significant	82%	68%	85%	0.008**
Career growth (1.)				
Insignificant	4%	0%	5%	1.968
Significant	96%	100%	95%	0.374
Adventurous activities (2.)				
Insignificant	6%	3%	7%	0.941
Significant	94%	97%	93%	0.625
Physical readiness (4.)				
Insignificant	8%	5%	9%	0.705
Significant	92%	95%	91%	0.703
Interpersonal relations (6.)				
Insignificant	15%	3%	18%	9.073
Significant	85%	97%	82%	0.011*
Security of employment (3.)				

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Insignificant	9%	3%	10%	2.892 (2)
Significant	91%	97%	90%	0.236
Order and discipline (17.)				
Insignificant	30%	24%	31%	1.621
Significant	70%	76%	69%	0.445

* Groups are significantly different ($p < 0.05$)

** Groups are significantly different ($p < 0.01$)

The aspects resulting from the very characteristics of the military profession belong to the most important motives for joining the army. For four factors from this category, the null hypotheses were rejected. There is a statistically significant difference between the motivation of men and women based on their perception of participation in missions, working with military technology, working in the field and interpersonal relations (social and team atmosphere). Participation in missions, working with military technology and in the field play a more significant role in motivation to join the army for male soldiers while female soldiers are proven to be motivated by interpersonal relations more than male soldiers.

Table 4: Motivational Factors – the Position of The Army in Society

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Service to the country/patriotism (9.)				
Insignificant	20%	26%	19%	2.194
Significant	80%	74%	81%	0.334
Representation of the Czech Republic (13.)				
Insignificant	20%	22%	19%	2.423
Significant	80%	78%	81%	0.298
Meaningfulness/usefulness of the military service (7.)				
Insignificant	17%	16%	17%	0.846
Significant	83%	84%	83%	0.655
Current security situation in the world (22.)				
Insignificant	56%	55%	56%	7.449
Significant	44%	45%	44%	0.059

The factors from the position of the army in society category are somewhat fragmented. For example, the meaningfulness and usefulness of the military service for society is highly motivating for the respondents while the current security situation in the world is not as much. For all the factors from this category, the null hypotheses were not rejected. No significant difference was found between the motivation of men and women based on these factors.

Table 5: Motivational Factors – Personal Interests

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Family tradition (27.)				
Insignificant	80%	82%	80%	0.347
Significant	20%	18%	20%	0.841
Compliance with army values (18.)				

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Insignificant	35%	34%	36%	0.652
Significant	65%	66%	64%	0.722
Interest in history (21.)				
Insignificant	51%	76%	44%	15.099
Significant	49%	24%	56%	0.020*
Interest in warfare (12.)				
Insignificant	21%	26%	19%	8.822
Significant	79%	74%	81%	0.012*

* Groups are significantly different ($p < 0.05$)

** Groups are significantly different ($p < 0.01$)

The factors from the personal interest category have the average to below average importance for the respondents. For two factors the null hypotheses were rejected - the statistically significant difference between the men and women is revealed in the area of the interest in history and warfare. Women are not motivated by the interest in history and warfare as significantly as men.

In a similar way of quantifying, the Likert scale as in the case of motivational factors, demotivational factors can also be ranked from the most to the least discouraging (see the numbers in brackets after each demotivating factor in table 6 for total / women / men). Table 6 also shows the relative frequencies of responses of all the respondents, separately of women and men and results of the chi-square test. For the purposes of maintaining the simplicity of the tables, the four scales were merged in two – discouraging and not discouraging factors.

Table 6: Demotivational Factors

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Necessity of discipline (5.)				
Discouraging	13%	13%	13%	0.05
Not discouraging	87%	87%	87%	0.975
Risk of injury (4.)				
Discouraging	20%	30%	81%	7.353
Not discouraging	80%	70%	19%	0.025*
Risk of loss of life (3.)				
Discouraging	32%	46%	28%	7.908
Not discouraging	68%	54%	72%	0.019*
Possibility of being sent to a mission (7.)				
Discouraging	13%	13%	13%	10.456
Not discouraging	87%	87%	87%	0.005**
Necessity to maintain physical condition (9.)				
Discouraging	8%	11%	8%	4.715
Not discouraging	92%	89%	92%	0.095
Necessity of wearing a uniform (8.)				
Discouraging	3%	8%	2%	3.122

Factor (overall order of significance)	Total (%)	Women (%)	Men (%)	χ^2 p
Not discouraging	97%	92%	98%	0.210
Fear of bullying (6.)				
Discouraging	13%	21%	10%	7.25
Not discouraging	87%	79%	90%	0.027*
Restriction of certain rights (2.)				
Discouraging	42%	37%	44%	3.41 (2)
Not discouraging	58%	63%	56%	0.182
Enlistment for 10 or more years (1.)				
Discouraging	49%	53%	48%	5.332
Not discouraging	51%	47%	52%	0.070

* Groups are significantly different ($p < 0.05$)

** Groups are significantly different ($p < 0.01$)

Enlistment for 10 or more years was a factor that appeared to be the most discouraging from joining the army. On the contrary, the necessity to improve and maintain physical condition proved to be the least problematic. For four demotivating factors, the null hypotheses were rejected and the alternative hypotheses were accepted. In relation to the aspects causing potential demotivation from joining the army there is a statistically significant difference between the men's and women's perception of the risk of injury, the risk of loss of life, the possibility of being sent to a mission and fear of bullying. Women are proven to be discouraged by these factors more than men.

5. Discussion

Financial motivators of armed forces were found to be moderately important and no differences were revealed between men and women. This conclusion is consistent with some previous research (Pliske et al., 1986; Grigorov and Spiridonov, 2018 or Eighmey, 2006), in which the economic aspects were rated as important compared to other motivators. On the other hand, other studies focusing on gender differences revealed high importance of the economic aspect for women when considering joining armed forces. Mankovski (2015) or Ďurechová (2012) argued that it is the most important aspect for women.

The employee benefits are perceived by the UoD students (both women and men) as the least important category for motivation. A similar conclusion follows from a similarly focused research – benefits are not usually mentioned as essential for deciding about a military career. Only Grigorov and Spiridonov (2018) declare that the benefits arising from the military career were also indicated as important.

The work itself (the very characteristics of the military profession) was evaluated as the most important motive for joining the army. The most important factors are career growth, adventurous activities, security of employment and physical readiness. These conclusions are similar to the findings of Grigorov and Spiridonov (2018) and Grigorov (2020). Certain gender differences are found in our research, namely participation in missions, working with military technology and in the field, which were more important for male soldiers. Female soldiers are proven to be motivated in a higher rate by interpersonal relations.

As for the motivation related to the position of the army in society, the most important factors are connected with the meaningfulness and usefulness of the military service, other aspects are not so important – especially the current security situation (the conflict between Ukraine and Russia). Regarding the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, students largely add that this situation did not negatively affect their decision. On the contrary, it strengthened their determination to join the army. This finding corresponds with the survey of Ben-Dor (2008) that suggests motivation to serve in wartime is higher than in peacetime.

The factors from the personal interest category (family tradition, interest in warfare or history, compliance with military values) are of the average importance for the respondents. For instance, Grigorov and Spiridonov (2020) mention the interest in weapons and military equipments as one of the motivational aspects, historical interest is mentioned by Ginexi et al. (1994). Among the students of the UoD, the gender differences were

shown in the case of the interest in history and warfare. Women are not motivated by these factors as much as men.

As for the demotivational aspects, the most important seems to be the enlistment for 10 or more years, followed by the necessity of limiting some rights. The necessity of good physical condition is not perceived as a problem. Women significantly more often declare the risk of injury and loss of life as a demotivational factor. For men, this factor also plays a role, but statistically significantly less than for women. This conclusion corresponds with/to the study by Nathan et al. (2016), which confirms notably lower representation of women in combat positions, which is also evident in the CAF (Hřebíček, 2016).

6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research conducted with 179 first-year military students of the University of Defence, the main conclusions can be drawn, and the stated research question thereby answered. The importance of motives for the military career choice was measured on selected motivational factors reflecting the specifics of the military profession - financial evaluation, employee benefits, work itself, position of the army in society and personal interests.

The work itself category was the most important for the respondent (mainly the career growth, adventurous and adrenaline activities, security of employment or physical readiness), while the employee benefits category was the least relevant/important. The enlistment for 10 or more years, restriction of certain rights and the risk of loss of life belonged, on the contrary, to the factors causing discouragement from joining the CAF.

For several factors from two motivational categories (work itself and personal interests) and for several factors linked to the discouragement from joining the army significant differences between the perception of men and women were noted. Participation in missions, working with military technology or in the field, interest in history and warfare play a more essential role in motivation to join the army for men than for women, while female soldiers are proven to be motivated by interpersonal relations. Moreover, in relation to the aspects causing demotivation from joining the army, women were found to be discouraged by the risk of injury, the risk of loss of life, the possibility of being sent to a mission and fear of bullying much more than men.

The conclusions of the research are valid only for the given sample and are intended to be further verified with the help of quantitative and qualitative research. It would be for example interesting to investigate differences between motivational factors of men and women entering the UoD and recruits joining the CAF directly (to military units), compare results obtained from the research in the military with other security forces (such as the fire department and police department personnel), make an international military comparison or continue a longitudinal study of this research sample to find out how the motivational factors change over time.

All volunteer forces, like any other employer, are looking for their own positions and competitive advantage in the labour market. Therefore, it is important for the MoD to learn about and ascertain the motives for joining the CAF.

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