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PSYCHOSOCIAL CONDITIONING OF THE SERVICE OF FEMALE SOLDIERS IN THE TERRITORIAL DEFENCE FORCES OF THE REPUBLIC OF POLAND

Abstract: *The aim of this article is to analyze the psychosocial determinants of women's service in the Territorial Defense Forces of the Republic of Poland, using the example of the 10th Świętokrzyska Territorial Defense Brigade. Qualitative and quantitative methods (survey and in-depth interviews) were used. The research findings indicate that women are primarily driven by patriotic motivations, the need for self-fulfillment, and the pursuit of new experiences. The main barriers include gender stereotypes, difficulties in balancing service with family life, and physical demands. The article also explores the prospects for women's military careers in the Territorial Defense Forces and the importance of their role for national security.*

Keywords: *Territorial Defense Forces, women in the army, national security*

Introduction

The presence of women in military structures is a fascinating area of research, revealing changing gender roles in the context of national defense. Women, who are increasingly choosing to join the military, bring unique perspectives and skills, thus influencing the dynamics and functioning of military units. The process of their integration provides an interesting example of how traditional military structures adapt to the demands of contemporary social and defense realities.

In the context of modern defense, the role of women in the military is becoming increasingly visible and appreciated. Women bring to the service not

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only their skills and knowledge but also a different approach to problem-solving and teamwork. However, women in the military face specific challenges and barriers that can influence their decision to join and the further course of their military careers. Understanding women's motivations for joining is crucial for creating effective recruitment programs and ensuring appropriate support during service. At the same time, it is important to identify the challenges women face in the military, such as gender stereotypes, differences in treatment, and difficulties combining military service with family life. Analyzing these aspects allows for a better understanding and support of women in the military, which in turn contributes to more effective and harmonious cooperation within military units.

Territorial Defense Forces in the defense system of the Republic of Poland

The Territorial Defense Forces are an integral part of the Republic of Poland's defense system, designed to be flexible, responsive, and focused on local operations. The structure of the Territorial Defense Forces is tailored to the needs and specifics of a given country, usually divided into regions corresponding to the country's administrative division. The Territorial Defense Forces consist of smaller, independent units capable of conducting operations in a variety of conditions, often with an emphasis on guerrilla and asymmetric warfare².

The basis of the structure of the Territorial Defense Forces is its modularity – units are designed to be easily adapted, scaled and reconfigured depending on needs and changing conditions. This flexibility allows the unit to quickly adapt to a variety of scenarios, from defensive operations to crisis relief. Each Territorial Defense Force unit operates autonomously, with its own resources and leadership. This allows for local decision-making and rapid response to area-specific challenges.

Territorial Defense Forces are closely linked to local social and administrative structures, enabling the effective use of local resources and knowledge. This integration increases the effectiveness of defense operations and supports the development of strong ties between the army and society. These units often consist of reserve soldiers who combine military service with civilian life³.

At the highest level of the Territorial Defense Forces' command hierarchy in Poland is the Territorial Defense Forces Command, which is directly subordinate to the Minister of National Defense. This central command is responsible for the overall strategy, policy, and coordination of the activities of all Territorial Defense Forces units throughout the country.

In Poland, the Territorial Defense Forces are divided into territorially organized brigades, corresponding to individual voivodeships. Each brigade is head-

² *Wojska Obrony Terytorialnej*, <<https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/wojska-obrony-terytorialnej>> (01.05.2025).

³ M. Pawlisiak, *System logistyczny determinantem bezpieczeństwa Sił Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej*, Warszawa 2016, s. 56-60.

ed by a commander, who is responsible for the operational management of the unit, the implementation of training tasks, and coordination with local authorities and other services. These brigades are tasked with implementing the defense strategy at the regional level. Each Territorial Defense brigade is organized territorially, meaning its structure and deployment are closely linked to the geography and specifics of a given voivodeship. A typical brigade consists of several light infantry battalions, strategically deployed throughout the region to ensure a rapid response to threats and effective territorial defense. The brigade's strength can range from several thousand to several dozen thousand soldiers, depending on the size and defense needs of a given voivodeship.

The formation of the 10th Świętokrzyska Territorial Defense Brigade began in January 2018. The brigade's organizational structure developed dynamically, enabling the first training sessions to begin in September of the same year. The first ceremonial oath-taking ceremony for the soldiers of this unit took place on September 23, 2018, in Kielce. Currently – as of September 2024 – the brigade's strength reaches nearly 1,400 soldiers, of which women constitute 20% of that number.

The first significant challenge faced by the soldiers of the 10th Brigade was providing support in counteracting and mitigating the effects of natural disasters caused by heavy rainfall that occurred in the Świętokrzyskie Voivodeship in May 2019. 150 soldiers from the 10th Świętokrzyska Brigade were on standby for operations in the Sandomierz region. They were also deployed to strengthen embankments in the town of Zawichost. Another test for the soldiers was their active participation in operations related to counteracting the COVID-19 pandemic. They worked in medical facilities, social welfare homes, and supported the police and sanitary services. They also supported the voivode and local government authorities in preventing the spread of COVID-19. They operated on the "front line", supporting hospitals through social welfare homes in Zagórska, Gnojno, and Skarżysko Kamienna. They also supported the police and the Sanitary Inspectorate during quarantine inspections. Due to the epidemiological situation, the 10th Świętokrzyska Territorial Defence Brigade also joined the blood collection campaign for the Regional Blood Donation and Treatment Center. In 2020, Operation "Resilient Spring" was initiated, which was then continued through support for the region's residents as part of Operation "Sustainable Immunity"⁴.

Women in the Territorial Defense Forces

As of March 1, 2024, 17,334 women are serving professionally in the Polish Army, constituting 13 percent of the total number of soldiers. Women serve in all

⁴ Święto 10. *Świętokrzyskiej Brygady Obrony Terytorialnej*, <<https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/10bot/articles/aktualnosci-w/swieto-10-swietokrzyskiej-brygady-obrony-terytorialnej/>> (01.05.2025).

corps and branches of the armed forces, serving in command, technical, medical, educational, and private positions. One in four people entering voluntary military service is a woman. It is worth noting that the participation of women in the regular Polish Army has increased over the years. In the 1990s, women constituted only a fraction of a percent of the total number of soldiers, and their number steadily increased in subsequent decades, especially after 2004, when a number of reforms and programs encouraging women to join the army were introduced. For example, in 2010, the number of women in the military was approximately 5,000, and by 2020, it had reached 12,000, demonstrating significant growth and growing social and institutional acceptance of women in the armed forces. The current number of 17,334 women in the Polish Army proves that this trend is continuing and that women are becoming increasingly involved in various aspects of military service⁵.

The participation of women in the Territorial Defense Forces in Poland is an important aspect of the modern defense system, demonstrating social evolution and fundamental changes in the perception of gender roles in the military. The inclusion of women not only enriches the armed forces with new perspectives and skills but also reflects the pursuit of equality and integration within the armed forces. The presence of women in the Territorial Defense Forces is significant not only from an operational perspective but also from a social perspective, building a model of diversity and inclusion, which is crucial for modern military organizations.

Women in the Territorial Defense Forces contribute to expanding the competencies and skills available within territorial defense, offering unique experiences and perspectives that are invaluable in a variety of operational and training scenarios. Their role in such units is not limited to traditional functions but encompasses a wide range of specialties and skills, from logistics and medical support, through operational activities, to command roles.

The increasing presence of women in the Territorial Defense Forces also reflects global trends in defense, where gender equality is becoming a key element in building effective and sustainable armed forces. This is a step forward in breaking down stereotypes and limitations that have historically excluded women from certain aspects of military service. Therefore, the development and integration of women in the Territorial Defense Forces not only increases the effectiveness and adaptability of these forces but also serves as a crucial element in promoting equality and diversity within society.

The recruitment of women to the Territorial Defence Forces is an important element of evolving defence policy, reflecting global trends in gender equality and integration in the defence sector. This process, encompassing legal, social, psy-

⁵ *Kobiety w armii. To już ponad 17 tysięcy żołnierzy zawodowych*, <<https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/kobiety-w-armii-to-juz-ponad-17-tysiecy-zolnierzy-zawodowych>> (01.05.2025).

chological, and operational aspects, requires in-depth analysis and understanding to fully realize the potential of greater integration of women in the armed forces. From a legal perspective, the recruitment of women to the Territorial Defense Forces is in line with international standards on gender equality. The Homeland Defense Act of 2022 does not introduce any gender-based restrictions on access to service, paving the way for equal participation of women and men in territorial defense. This step is consistent with Poland's commitments as a NATO member and signatory to various international agreements promoting gender equality. The legal aspect is crucial in shaping recruitment policy, ensuring equal opportunities and eliminating formal barriers that could limit women's access to service⁶.

The social dimension of women's recruitment into the Territorial Defense Forces is equally important. It promotes gender equality and works to counteract stereotypes related to gender roles in the defense sector. Integrating women into the armed forces can contribute to increased social acceptance of the concept of defense and women's military service. This is important given the historical and cultural contexts in which women's roles have often been limited to the domestic sphere. Promoting women's active participation in the Territorial Defense Forces is therefore an important element in creating a more inclusive society⁷.

The psychological aspects of women's integration into the Territorial Defense Forces concern adaptation to the military environment and diversity management. Women entering a traditionally male-dominated environment may encounter challenges related to the need for acceptance and the need to adapt to existing norms and practices. Building effective mixed teams, promoting equality and justice, and combating discrimination and harassment are key issues. Psychological support, mentoring, and personal development programs can play a key role in facilitating this adaptation and building positive relationships between team members⁸.

The operational importance of women in the Territorial Defense Forces is a significant aspect in the context of contemporary defense operations. Women perform a wide range of roles and tasks that transcend traditional frameworks and demonstrate their comprehensive contribution to the operational effectiveness of the armed forces. Their presence not only enriches military structures but also introduces new perspectives and skills that are essential in the dynamic environment of the modern battlefield. Women in the Territorial Defense Forces perform roles ranging from specialized medical and logistical functions to participation in field operations and technical support⁹. For example, their contribu-

⁶ M. Pietrzak, *3,5 tys. kobiet wśród terytorialsów*, <<https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/dwot/articles/aktualnosci-w/2020-03-27k-35-tys-kobiet-wsrod-terytorialsow/>> (01.05.2025).

⁷ *Kobiety w WOT*, <<https://media.terytorialsi.wp.mil.pl/informacje/651073/kobiety-w-wot>> (01.05.2025).

⁸ *Ibidem*.

⁹ B. Drapikowska, *Udział kobiet – żołnierzy w zadaniach operacyjnych realizowanych przez*

tion to military medicine is invaluable, particularly in crisis situations and humanitarian missions, where their skills and empathy contribute to effective care and support for the injured. Furthermore, women often play key roles in logistics and communications, providing essential support in the planning and execution of operations. In the context of field operations, the presence of women in the Territorial Defense Forces enables the implementation of specific tasks where their presence can be beneficial, such as interactions with civilians, especially in cultures where contact between women and men is limited. Women in the Territorial Defense Forces can also play an important role in psychological and informational activities, using their communication skills and empathy to build trust and cooperation with local communities¹⁰.

It's also worth noting the growing participation of women in command and decision-making roles within the Territorial Defense Forces. Their presence in these roles not only represents an important step towards gender equality but also contributes to a more diverse approach in decision-making processes. Decisions made by gender-diverse teams are often characterized by greater depth of analysis and creativity, which is crucial in a dynamic operational environment. One example is the participation of women in Territorial Defense Forces in exercises and operations designed to respond to civilian crises, such as natural disasters or pandemics. In these situations, women demonstrate not only essential technical skills but also the ability to quickly adapt to changing conditions and work effectively under pressure¹¹.

Career development strategies for women in the Territorial Defense Forces are a crucial element in shaping a modern and sustainable armed forces. The contemporary approach to recruitment and professional development for women in the Territorial Defense Forces reflects a paradigm shift in military personnel structures, emphasizing gender equality and diversity. The goal of these strategies is not only to attract women to military service but also to provide them with equal opportunities for professional development, advancement, and participation in various aspects of military activity. As part of its recruitment strategies, the Territorial Defense Forces focus on actively promoting military careers among women. Information and marketing campaigns are implemented to present the military as an attractive place to work for women. These campaigns often focus on aspects such as professional development opportunities, work-life bal-

Polskie Kontyngenty Wojskowe w Iraku i Afganistanie, praca doktorska, Akademia Obrony Narodowej, Warszawa 2015.

¹⁰ *Obowiązek kwalifikacji kobiet-medyków do wojska. Projekt ustawy w Sejmie jeszcze w tym roku?*, 2022, <<https://www.rynekzdrowia.pl/Polityka-zdrowotna/Obowiazek-kwalifikacji-kobiet-medykow-do-wojska-Projekt-ustawy-w-Sejmie-jeszcze-w-tym-roku,239992,14.html>> (01.05.2025).

¹¹ *Równouprawnienie w WAT. Definicje*, <<https://www.wojsko-polskie.pl/wat/rownouprawnienie-w-wat-definicje/>> (01.05.2025).

ance, and training and education support. Another key element of the strategy is the development of training programs and support networks that enable women to exchange experiences and knowledge with more experienced soldiers. These programs help women adapt to the military environment, and also support them in developing their careers and overcoming potential barriers¹².

Furthermore, the Territorial Defense Forces actively work to ensure equal opportunities in advancement and professional development. This includes not only equal access to training and qualification courses, but also encouraging and supporting women in applying for higher command and management positions. Carefully designed career paths and promotion systems help identify and promote talent among women in the military¹³.

Another important aspect is ensuring a women-friendly working environment and organizational environment. This includes both practical aspects, such as appropriate equipment and infrastructure, as well as an organizational culture that promotes equality and respect¹⁴. The effective implementation of these strategies is exemplified by the growing number of women holding key positions within the Territorial Defense Forces, demonstrating the effectiveness of these initiatives. These women, fulfilling diverse roles, from specialists to command positions, serve as inspiration and role models for future generations of women considering military careers. The future prospects for women's role in the Territorial Defense Forces are promising and point to further progress towards full integration and gender equality¹⁵.

In the context of evolving defense policy, strategy, and military operations, several key trends can be expected to shape the future role of women in the Territorial Defense Forces. First, the participation of women at all levels of the military hierarchy will increase, resulting from both further changes in recruitment policy and career development strategies. It's possible that in the future we will see more women in unit commanders and in senior management positions. This will result not only from gender equality policies but also from recognizing their unique competencies and experience as an added value for operational effectiveness.

Another significant trend will be the further adaptation and modernization of infrastructure and equipment to better meet women's needs. It can be expected that aspects such as the ergonomics of military equipment, uniforms, and base infrastructure will become increasingly tailored to women, contributing to im-

¹² *Dla pracodawcy. Obowiązki pracodawcy*, <<https://terytorialsi.wp.mil.pl/dla-pracodawcy/obowiazki-pracodawcy>> (01.05.2025).

¹³ *Daleko do równości płci w pracy*, <<https://www.rp.pl/pracodawca-rzeczpospolitej/art-38648061-daleko-do-rownosci-plci-w-pracy>> (01.05.2025).

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ K. Kuśmirek, *Slużba kobiet w siłach zbrojnych*, „Czasopismo Naukowe Instytutu Studiów Kobietych” 2017, nr 1 (2), s. 108-125.

proved efficiency and comfort in service. Furthermore, as the number of women in the Territorial Defence Forces increases, it is anticipated that gender equality issues will become even more integrated into mainstream military training and education. Training and educational programs will increasingly focus on promoting diversity, equality, and inclusion, contributing to building a stronger and more cohesive military culture¹⁶.

Own research methodology

The research employed mixed methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, allowing for a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation.

The research group consisted of women serving in the 10th Świętokrzyska Brigade of the Territorial Defense Force. The aim of the study was to understand the role and experiences of women serving in the Territorial Defense Force, as well as to identify the barriers and challenges they face. I aimed to examine how their presence impacts the functioning and structure of the Territorial Defense Force and how they are perceived by their colleagues and superiors. The study focused on women serving in the Territorial Defense Force, their motivations for joining the service, their daily experiences, the difficulties they encounter, and their career prospects. The opinions of their colleagues and superiors were also analyzed to provide a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under study.

During the study, several challenges were anticipated that could have impacted the research process and the quality of the data obtained, such as difficulties in reaching respondents due to their professional responsibilities and limited time, the possibility of respondents being hesitant to disclose their experiences and opinions despite ensuring anonymity, challenges related to recruiting a sufficiently diverse research group to ensure representative results, and the possibility of reluctance to participate in the study due to fear of negative professional consequences.

The research employed mixed methods, combining both quantitative and qualitative approaches, allowing for a more comprehensive picture of the phenomenon under investigation. To ensure representativeness of the results, the study included a variety of demographic profiles, such as age, education, length of service, and function. Two main research tools were employed: a survey and an interview. Both tools were designed to provide a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the phenomenon under investigation from various perspectives, enabling the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data.

The research group for this study includes 112 women serving in the 10th

¹⁶ J. Nabiałek, *Ile osób zrekrutowały wojska obrony terytorialnej? WOT podsumowuje 2023 rok*, <<https://forsal.pl/gospodarka/aktualnosci/artykuly/9391236,ile-osob-zrekrutowaly-wojska-obrony-terytorialnej-wot-podsumowuje-202.html>> (01.05.2025).

Świętokrzyska Brigade of the Territorial Defense Forces. The study included women who expressed a willingness to participate; no additional criteria were applied to the study group selection. The total number of women in the Territorial Defense Forces is approximately 3,700, representing 16% of the entire Territorial Defense Force personnel. In the 10th Świętokrzyska Brigade, women constitute approximately 20% of the over 1,100 soldiers. Considering the above, it can be assumed that the 10th Świętokrzyska Brigade is a representative unit of the entire formation, and the results of the research conducted on female soldiers serving in this brigade can be generalized and thus used to analyze the issues surrounding women's service in the Territorial Defense Forces.

The recruitment process for the study participants was conducted in compliance with research ethics, ensuring anonymity and voluntary participation, aimed at obtaining honest and authentic responses. Analysis of the data collected from this research group provides a picture of the motivations, demographics, and perceptions of women's roles in the Territorial Defense Forces, which is essential for formulating conclusions and recommendations regarding the Territorial Defense Forces' recruitment and training policies.

The study comprised several key stages, which took place in April and May 2024. The survey was prepared electronically using Google Forms and distributed to women serving in the 10th Świętokrzyska Brigade. Of the collected surveys, 112 were valid, meaning they were returned and used, representing 96.5% of the total. Four were rejected due to the use of humorous responses, representing 3.5% of the total. The survey was anonymous, ensuring the comfort and freedom of respondents to provide honest answers. After completing the survey, respondents could automatically send their responses to a designated email address, simplifying the data collection process and ensuring data security. Simultaneously, interviews were conducted during a research visit to the unit. These interviews enabled direct, in-depth conversations with selected respondents, allowing for the collection of more detailed and qualitative data regarding their experiences and reflections on service in the Territorial Defence Forces.

Psychosocial conditions of service of female soldiers – research results and interpretation

The largest group of survey participants are women aged 35-44, who constitute 32% of the sample. The next largest group are women aged 18-24, who constitute 29% of the sample. Women aged 25-34 represent 25% of the sample, while the smallest group is represented by women aged 45-54, who constitute 14% of the sample. This graph visualizes the age diversity of the respondents, allowing for a better understanding of the age structure of women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces.

In terms of education, the largest group are women with higher education, representing 56% of respondents. Women with secondary education constitute 43% of respondents. Only 1% of respondents have vocational education, and 1% have primary education. This chart illustrates the predominance of higher and secondary education among women serving in the Territorial Defence Forces, which may be important for analyzing their motivations and roles within this formation.

The next category is the place of residence of women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces. The data was divided into three categories: rural areas, cities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, and cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants. The results show that 30% of respondents live in rural areas. An equal 35% of the surveyed women live in cities with fewer than 50,000 inhabitants, and another 35% in cities with more than 50,000 inhabitants.

The women surveyed were asked whether their children were of legal age when they entered service in the Territorial Defense Forces. The results showed that 40% of respondents responded affirmatively, indicating that their children were of legal age when they entered service or had no children. However, 60% responded negatively, indicating that their children were not yet of legal age when they entered service.

The next question concerned the women's current family situation at the time of their service in the Territorial Defense Forces. The results showed that 63% of respondents were in a relationship when they joined the military. However, 31% of the women surveyed were not in a relationship at the time of their service. An additional 6% of respondents declined to answer this question.

The next question concerned previous experiences with uniformed services. The results showed that 70% of respondents had no previous involvement with uniformed services before joining the Territorial Defense Forces. However, 30% of the women surveyed had such experiences in the past.

Women were asked about their sources of information about the Territorial Defense Forces before joining this unit. The results show that 37% of respondents obtained information online, representing the largest group. Another 29% of women learned about the Territorial Defense Forces from family or friends. The Territorial Defense Forces' promotional campaign was a source of information for 23% of respondents. Other sources of information, including traditional media and local events, accounted for 11%. In the "other" section, respondents indicated the following answers: school, the Military Recruitment Center, television, the Ministry of National Defense, and recruiters.

The next question concerned the influence of patriotism on the decision to serve in the Territorial Defense Forces among the surveyed women. Respondents rated this influence on a scale of 1 to 5, where "1" meant no influence and "5" meant a very strong influence. The results show that 13.5% of respondents rated the influence of patriotism at "1", indicating a low influence of patriotism on their decision. Another 9% of women rated this influence at "2". A rating of "3", indicating a moderate influence, was chosen by

12% of respondents. A significant influence of patriotism, rated at “4”, was indicated by 33% of respondents, constituting the largest group. A very strong influence of patriotism on the decision to join the Territorial Defense Forces, rated at “5”, was indicated by 32% of respondents.

Respondents were also asked about other factors (besides patriotism) influencing their decision to serve in the Territorial Defense Forces. They could select more than one answer. The results show that 58% of respondents indicated personal development as a significant motivating factor for their decision to serve. The desire to serve was important for 52% of the surveyed women. The financial aspect influenced 54% of the respondents, demonstrating the importance of the material benefits associated with serving in the Territorial Defense Forces. Tradition was an important factor influencing their decision for 15% of the women. The desire to meet new people was indicated by 14% of the respondents. Only 3% of the women stated that none of the factors mentioned influenced their decision. Other factors were mentioned by 9% of the respondents. As indicated by the responses, personal development, financial development, and the desire to serve were, alongside patriotism, the main motivators for women deciding to join the Territorial Defense Forces. The respondents in the “other” category indicated the following answers: 1) Desire for adventure; 2) Desire to continue education, as well as values instilled by school; 3) “I have always dreamed of the army”; 4) Desire to learn how to use weapons; 5) “A good option for pregnant women”; 6) Searching for a husband; 7) Desire to meet new people without establishing an intimate relationship; 8) Dreams of a uniform from younger years; 9) Love of the homeland and honoring the memory of people and soldiers fighting to defend the homeland; 10) Protecting the workplace; 11) Honor; 12) Meeting people with similar interests; 13) Testing oneself.

Women’s statements regarding their motivations for joining the military are extremely interesting and varied, and can be grouped into several categories. The patriotic-identity category includes motivations such as love of the homeland, honoring the memory of individuals and soldiers who fought to defend the country, dreams of wearing a uniform from a younger age, and honor. The material-living group includes reasons such as job security and the recognition that military service is a good option for pregnant women. Professional motivations include the desire to continue education, learn how to use weapons, and the desire to test oneself and meet people with similar interests. The social category includes the desire to meet new people without establishing a relationship and seeking a husband. Furthermore, some statements indicate more personal motivations, such as a desire for adventure or fulfilling the dream of joining the military.

The next question asked about the extent to which women’s service-related expectations were met. The results showed that 39% of respondents stated that their expectations were fully met. However, 9% of the women surveyed felt that

their expectations were not met. The largest group, representing 52% of respondents, stated that their expectations were only partially met. This graph illustrates that while most women had somewhat positive service-related experiences, full satisfaction of expectations was not universal among the survey participants.

Respondents were asked to rate the recruitment process for the Territorial Defense Forces. They could rate the recruitment process on a scale of 1 to 5, with “1” indicating a very low rating and “5” indicating a very high rating. The results show that 40% of respondents rated the recruitment process as a “5” (highest rating). Another 28% of respondents rated it as a “4”, indicating an overall positive experience. A “3” rating was given by 21% of women, indicating moderate satisfaction with the recruitment process. Only 2% of respondents rated the recruitment process as a “2”, indicating some dissatisfaction. The lowest rating, “1”, was given by 9% of women. This result indicates that the majority of women had positive experiences with the military recruitment process, with the highest ratings received by a significant portion of female respondents.

The next question asked about perceived differences in treatment based on gender. The results showed that 68% of respondents did not perceive any differences in treatment based on their gender. However, 17% of women surveyed stated that they were favored because of their gender. In turn, 15% of respondents felt they were discriminated against. This finding demonstrates that the majority of women do not perceive differences in treatment within Territorial Defense units, although there is a noticeable group who experience both positive and negative differences in treatment based on gender.

The next question asked about the assessment of opportunities for advancement and professional development based on gender. The results showed that 56% of respondents believed that their opportunities for advancement and professional development were not limited by gender. Meanwhile, 25% of women surveyed believed that their gender negatively impacted opportunities for advancement and professional development. However, 19% of respondents found it difficult to determine the impact of gender on their opportunities for advancement and development.

The survey participants were asked to rate the integration of women with men in the Territorial Defense Forces. Respondents rated the level of integration on a scale of 1 to 5, where “1” indicates very low integration and “5” indicates very high integration. The results show that 59% of respondents rated integration with men as the highest level, “5”, indicating very good integration. A rating of “4” was given by 23% of the surveyed women, also indicating positive integration experiences. A moderate rating of “3” was given by 14% of the respondents. Low integration, rated “2”, was given by 2% of the survey participants. The lowest rating, “1”, was given by 2% of the respondents. This result suggests that most women in the Territorial Defense Forces experience a high level of inte-

gration with their male colleagues, which may indicate a positive atmosphere of cooperation and mutual support within the units.

The next question concerned participation in additional courses and training. The results show that 65% of respondents participated in such courses and training, while 25% did not have such an opportunity. This result indicates that the majority of women in the Territorial Defense Forces actively participate in additional training and skills development, which may indicate their commitment to professional development and qualification enhancement.

Respondents were able to comment on the quality of training in the Territorial Defense Forces. Respondents rated the quality of training on a scale of 1 to 5, where “1” indicates very low quality and “5” indicates very high quality. The results show that 30% of respondents rated the quality of training as the highest level, “5”. Another 29% of respondents rated it “4”, also indicating high quality training. A moderate rating of “3” was given by 29% of women. Low quality training, rated “2”, was given by 3% of respondents. The lowest rating, “1”, was given by 9% of respondents. This result indicates that the majority of women in the Territorial Defense Forces rate the quality of training as high or very high, which may indicate the effectiveness of the training programs and satisfaction with the courses and training offered.

The next question focused on whether the respondents would recommend joining the Territorial Defense Forces to other women. The results showed that 75% of respondents responded affirmatively, indicating that they would recommend service to other women. However, 12% of respondents stated that they would not recommend it. Finally, 13% of respondents had no opinion on the matter. This indicates that the vast majority of women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces are satisfied with their decision and would gladly recommend this path to other women.

Respondents were asked whether serving in the Territorial Defense Forces had an impact on the sense of security among the women surveyed. Respondents rated this impact on a scale of 1 to 5, where “1” indicated no impact and “5” a very significant impact. The results show that 38% of respondents rated their service’s impact on their sense of security as the highest, “5”. A rating of “4” was given by 27% of the surveyed women, also indicating a significant impact. A moderate impact, rated “3”, was indicated by 22% of respondents. A low impact, rated “2”, was indicated by 8% of respondents. The lowest rating, “1”, was given by 5% of respondents. Analysis of these responses indicates that the majority of women in the Territorial Defense Forces perceive a positive impact of their service on their sense of security, which may indicate the effectiveness and value of this formation in the context of personal and national security.

Respondents were asked whether they regretted joining the force. The results show that the vast majority of respondents, 93%, do not regret their decision to

join the Territorial Defense Forces. Only 7% of the surveyed women said they regretted their decision.

The final question asked whether the respondents would join the Territorial Defense Forces again. The results showed that 82% of respondents responded affirmatively, indicating that they would join the Territorial Defense Forces again. However, 8% of respondents stated that they would not. An additional 10% of respondents found it difficult to provide a clear answer and selected "I'm not sure". This result indicates that the overwhelming majority of women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces are satisfied with their decision and would gladly do so again, which may indicate positive experiences of service.

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The main motivations for joining the Territorial Defence Force include the desire to do something significant for the country, the opportunity for personal development, and the flexibility to combine service with professional life. In the interview, the respondent emphasized that she wanted to do something significant for her country and appreciated the flexibility the Territorial Defence Force offers. Survey data also indicate a variety of motivations, including the desire to serve, personal development, and the influence of patriotism on the decision to join the Territorial Defence Force. Women in the Territorial Defence Force face various challenges during recruitment and training. The most frequently cited difficulties are the intensity of physical training and balancing training with professional responsibilities. In the interview, the respondent noted that the greatest challenge was the intensity of physical training and balancing training with her professional responsibilities. Survey results also indicate similar challenges, including physical fitness, physical condition, and agility tests.

Daily life in the Territorial Defence Forces includes performing tasks related to specialization, participating in training and exercises, and the opportunity to combine service with civilian work. In the interview, the respondent described her daily life as a combination of official duties with civilian work, confirming the flexibility offered by the Territorial Defence Forces. Survey data also indicate a variety of experiences, with respondents emphasizing the opportunity for development, acquiring new skills, and satisfaction with their service. Relationships with male colleagues are generally rated positively. In the interview, the respondent noted that relationships with male colleagues are very good and

cooperation is based on mutual support. Surveys confirm these observations; the majority of female respondents did not feel any gender differences, and 44.4% stated that they did not feel any differences in treatment from their superiors. Only a small percentage of female respondents indicated various forms of unequal treatment, suggesting the need for further attention in this area.

An analysis of the motives and factors behind women joining the Territorial Defense Forces indicates a variety of reasons, including a desire to serve the country, opportunities for personal development, marriage goals, a desire for adventure, acquiring new skills, and the flexibility to combine service with professional life. However, the dominant motivation is the opportunity for personal and professional development. Women in the Territorial Defense Forces face challenges related to physical training and balancing official and civilian duties. Relationships with male colleagues are generally positive, and most respondents do not feel any gender differences. However, there is a need for further attention to cases of unequal treatment to ensure full equality and satisfaction with service in the Territorial Defence Forces.

An analysis of the challenges and barriers associated with women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces highlights a number of difficulties women must overcome during recruitment, training, and daily service. Data from surveys and interviews allows us to identify key issues that impact women's experiences in the military. Female soldiers encounter various challenges during recruitment and training. The most frequently cited difficulties are the intensity of physical training and balancing training with professional responsibilities.

In the interview, a respondent noted that the greatest challenge was the intensity of the physical training and balancing training with her professional responsibilities. Survey results also indicate similar challenges, such as physical fitness, physical condition, and agility testing. Many women cited challenges related to physical condition and the physical demands that are part of the training process and daily service. Physical challenges include carrying heavy equipment, intense exercises, and long marches. One respondent mentioned in the interview that the weight of the vest, weapon, and helmet they wore constantly posed a significant challenge. Another respondent noted that days when she had her period were particularly difficult due to pain and discomfort. Mental challenges primarily include the stress of psychotechnical tests and the need to push herself to learn new things before others.

Women in the Territorial Defense Forces also face logistical and organizational challenges. Some respondents cited difficulties with medical examinations in remote cities, which were particularly burdensome. Others cited problems with access to specialized training, which is often tailored to the unemployed, hindering the participation of professionally active women. Interpersonal relationships are another important aspect of women's service. Respondents typically rate their relationships with male colleagues as positive. In an interview, one respon-

dent emphasized that relationships with male colleagues are very good and based on mutual support. However, surveys show that 44.4% of respondents do not feel any gender differences, indicating positive experiences, but there are also reports of certain forms of unequal treatment. These responses apply to women of all ages. Women in the Territorial Defense Forces also face challenges related to balancing service with their private lives. Interviews and surveys indicate that some women struggle to balance work, military service, and family life. Respondents reported less time for weekend rest and difficulty balancing work and family care. Challenges and barriers related to women's service can be significant, especially in the context of domestic responsibilities. It is possible that home circumstances, such as childrearing, influence responses, suggesting a potential correlation between family responsibilities and perceptions of military service.

Challenges and barriers related to women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces include the intensity of physical training, logistical difficulties, psychological demands, and the need to balance service with personal life. Women also encounter challenges related to physical fitness, logistics, and interpersonal relationships. Although most respondents did not experience gender differences, some experiences suggest the need for further attention and corrective action to ensure full equality and satisfaction with military service.

An analysis of the challenges and barriers faced by women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces in the context of socio-demographic factors reveals significant differences in experiences and perceptions of these barriers depending on age, education, place of residence, marital status, and previous professional experience. Respondents from different age groups cited different challenges: younger women (aged 18-24) were more likely to emphasize the physical challenges associated with the demands of service, such as fitness tests and the weight of equipment. Older women (aged 35-44), on the other hand, cited difficulties in balancing service responsibilities with family and professional life.

Education also influenced the perception of challenges. Women with higher education were more likely to indicate training needs and expectations regarding training quality, while women with secondary or vocational education were more likely to report difficulties adapting to the rigors of military service and a lack of comprehensive information before joining the Territorial Defense Forces.

Location was another important factor. Women living in rural areas or small towns often faced logistical barriers, such as distance from military units and difficulties commuting to training. Respondents from larger cities, on the other hand, were more likely to report challenges with integrating with the rest of the team and having to adapt to the intense pace of military life.

Marital status and having children significantly influenced the perception of barriers. Married women and mothers indicated difficulties in combining family responsibilities with service, as well as a lack of support for childcare during training

and deployments. Childless and single women were more likely to report problems related to a lack of privacy and the intense physical demands of service.

Finally, previous professional experience in uniformed services influenced the ease of adaptation to the Territorial Defense Forces. Women with such experience were less likely to report adaptation problems and difficulties understanding military procedures, while newcomers were more likely to experience stress related to the new environment and the need to quickly master new skills.

In summary, the socio-demographic analysis reveals that the challenges and barriers of women serving in the Territorial Defense Forces are diverse and depend on many factors, which highlights the need for an individual approach to supporting and training women soldiers in this formation.

An analysis of military career development prospects for women in the Territorial Defense Forces reveals a complex picture of the opportunities available to women serving in this force. Data from surveys and interviews allows us to understand both existing opportunities and barriers that may impact women's professional development in the military. Women in the Territorial Defense Forces have access to various career development paths, including promotions and the opportunity to participate in specialized training. In the interview, a respondent noted that serving in the Territorial Defense Forces allows them to acquire new skills and develop professionally. Survey data indicates that 56% of respondents rate their chances for promotion and development positively, suggesting that there are real career opportunities within the Territorial Defense Forces. Respondents also emphasize the importance of courses and training available within the service, which allow for the development of qualifications. Despite existing opportunities, women in the Territorial Defense Forces face certain challenges related to promotion and career development. In surveys, 25% of respondents indicated they did not perceive any gender differences in promotion opportunities, while 19% stated that they found it difficult to assess these opportunities. An interview with one respondent indicated that she did not perceive any gender differences in treatment, suggesting that equality in promotion opportunities is a reality for many women. However, some women may encounter barriers stemming from internal procedures and subjective assessments by superiors, which requires further analysis and possible remedial action.

Support from command plays a key role in women's military career development. Respondents in interviews and surveys emphasize that relationships with superiors and the support they receive significantly impact their motivation and development opportunities. Most respondents do not perceive gender differences, indicating the positive impact of equality policies in the Territorial Defense Forces. However, the existence of some voices indicating favoritism or unequal treatment suggests that there is still a need to monitor and strengthen support and equality mechanisms. Women in the Territorial Defense Forces also face

challenges in balancing military service with their private lives. This balance is crucial for their long-term career development. Respondents indicate that the flexibility offered by the military in combining service with private life is a significant motivating factor. The ability to flexibly adapt service responsibilities to family and professional needs allows women to engage more fully in their professional development without having to sacrifice other aspects of their lives.

Military career prospects for women in the Territorial Defense Forces are promising, with access to numerous promotion and training opportunities. Most women rate their development opportunities positively, indicating the existence of real career opportunities within the Territorial Defense Forces. However, women also face challenges related to internal procedures and subjective assessments by superiors. Support from command and the ability to balance service and private life are crucial, allowing for a more complete commitment to professional development. Monitoring and strengthening support and equality mechanisms remain crucial in ensuring the satisfaction and effectiveness of women's service in the Territorial Defense Forces.

An analysis of military career prospects for women in the Territorial Defense Forces in the context of socio-demographic factors reveals significant differences in opportunities and challenges. Age plays a key role in career development. Younger women (18-24 years old) often have longer career prospects, which translates into greater interest in specialized courses and training, driven by a desire to acquire new skills and advance. Older women (35-44 years old), on the other hand, with some professional experience, can advance more quickly, although they may encounter barriers related to combining family responsibilities with a military career.

Education has a significant impact on career advancement opportunities. Women with higher education typically have greater career advancement opportunities due to the availability of continuing education courses and a better understanding of military organizational structure and procedures. Women with only secondary education, on the other hand, may face greater challenges in achieving promotions due to limited access to training tailored to their educational level.

Location also influences career prospects. Women from larger cities have better access to training centers and military units, which facilitates their development. However, women from small towns and rural areas face logistical barriers that make it difficult to regularly participate in training and courses, which can limit their opportunities for advancement.

Marital status and having children significantly impact career development. Married women and mothers often have to balance family responsibilities with the demands of military service, which impacts their access to additional training and courses and, in the long term, may limit their advancement opportunities. Childless and single women have greater flexibility in participating in courses and missions, which promotes faster career advancement.

Previous professional experience in uniformed services also plays a significant role. Women with such experience are better prepared and understand the demands of military service, which facilitates faster promotion. This experience contributes to greater confidence in pursuing higher positions and better adaptation to the demands of service in the Territorial Defense Forces.

In summary, military career prospects for women in the Territorial Defense Forces are diverse and dependent on numerous socio-demographic factors. An individualized approach to recruitment and support for female soldiers is crucial to ensuring equal opportunities for advancement within this formation.

Conclusions

Based on the analysis of the research results, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Information sources: Women learn about the Territorial Defence Force primarily from social media and friends, which highlights the importance of these communication channels in recruitment.
2. Main motivations: The most important motivations for joining the Territorial Defence Force are the desire to do something significant for the country, the opportunity for personal development, and the flexibility to combine service with professional life.
3. Physical endurance: Women cite the intensity of physical training as one of their greatest challenges, but they overcome these difficulties thanks to determination and the support of their colleagues.
4. Command support: Relationships with command and colleagues are usually viewed positively, which influences their motivation and satisfaction with service.
5. Life balance: Balancing service and private life is a significant challenge, but the Territorial Defense Forces flexibility in this regard is a key factor motivating women to join.
6. Development prospects: Most women assess their chances for advancement and development positively, indicating realistic career opportunities in the Territorial Defense Forces.
6. Equal opportunities: Despite generally positive assessments, some women encounter barriers related to internal procedures and the subjective assessments of superiors.
7. Importance of training: Courses and training available within the service are crucial for improving the qualifications and professional development of women in the Territorial Defense Forces.

8. Logistical challenges: Logistical problems, such as the need to travel to remote cities for medical examinations, constitute a significant barrier for women in the Territorial Defense Forces.
9. Need for further support: There is a need to monitor and strengthen support and equality mechanisms to ensure the full satisfaction and effectiveness of women's service in the Territorial Defense Forces.

Final remarks

This study, based on the 10th Świętokrzyska Brigade, explores the motivations behind women joining the Territorial Defense Forces and their role within these units, providing a comprehensive analysis of the functioning of this military formation and the unique position women occupy within it. The research collected and analyzed a variety of data, allowing for a deeper understanding of the motivations, challenges, and opportunities for women to advance their military careers.

An analysis of women's motivations for joining the Territorial Defense Forces revealed that the main factors were the desire to contribute to the country, the flexibility offered by the Territorial Defense Forces, and the opportunities for personal development. Respondents emphasized that the ability to combine service with professional life was a key factor in their decision to join the Territorial Defense Forces. Furthermore, the physical and mental challenges associated with service were cited as significant, yet surmountable with determination and support from colleagues and leadership.

Research also showed that women face various challenges during recruitment and service, such as the intensity of physical training, the need to balance service with personal life, and logistical difficulties. Despite these challenges, most respondents viewed their experiences in the Territorial Defense Forces positively, appreciating the support from command and colleagues, as well as the opportunities for professional development.

Military career prospects for women in the Territorial Defense Forces are promising, with access to numerous promotion and training opportunities. Most women rate their development prospects positively, indicating the existence of real career opportunities within the Territorial Defense Forces. Support from command and the ability to balance service with personal life are crucial, allowing for more full engagement in professional development. Monitoring and strengthening support and equality mechanisms remain crucial in ensuring the satisfaction and effectiveness of female soldiers' service.

The findings from the study indicate the need to continue supporting women in the Territorial Defense Forces by adapting training programs and personnel

policies to fully utilize their potential and ensure equal opportunities. Introducing additional support programs, particularly in the area of work-life balance, could contribute to increasing the number of women in the Territorial Defense Forces and their satisfaction with service. Continued research in this area is essential to responding to the changing needs and challenges faced by women in the Territorial Defense Forces and ensuring they receive full support at every stage of their military careers.

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