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The Role of Defence Education in Creating the Social Potential for Future Coeducational Uniformed Staff in Poland. Analysis of the Results of Interdisciplinary Research

Rola kształcenia obronnego w tworzeniu potencjału społecznego przyszłych koedukacyjnych kadr mundurowych w Polsce. Analiza interdyscyplinarnych wyników badań

The aim of this article is to show the results of studies on the role of defence education in creating the social potential for future coeducational uniformed staff in Poland. The empirical studies that have been carried out are within the fields of the social sciences and constitute a combination of security issues and gender in the armed forces. They are also important because of the possibilities of profiling young people with regard to their further professional work. A diagnostic survey method was used in the research. Survey and survey questionnaires were used as the technique and research tools. The collected empirical material was statistically processed by means of attendance and measures of central tendency, including a comparison of mean values. The results obtained indicate that the military environment should take an interest in young women who score higher in physical education and lower in behaviour, which may be a result of attempting to match the male social standards to deny young men their privileged position in applying for military jobs. Furthermore, family and health are important to the surveyed secondary school students regardless of their gender, which is why they plan their future in the uniformed services, which, according to them, can safeguard their health and family capital. The results of the study can be used in

efforts to recruit volunteers to serve in the Polish Armed Forces and in other European Union countries.

Key words: young women, adolescence, uniformed personnel, gender in the armed forces, security, defence education

Celem artykułu jest analiza roli kształcenia obronnego w tworzeniu potencjału społecznego przyszłych koedukacyjnych kadr mundurowych w Polsce. Przeprowadzone badania empiryczne lokują się w obszarze nauk społecznych i stanowią połączenie kwestii bezpieczeństwa oraz *gender in army*. Są one również istotne ze względu na możliwości profilowania młodych ludzi pod kątem ich dalszej pracy zawodowej. W badaniach zastosowano metodę sondażu diagnostycznego. Jako technikę i narzędzia badawcze wykorzystano ankietę i kwestionariusze ankiety. Zebrany materiał empiryczny został opracowany statystycznie przez zastosowanie frekwencji i miary tendencji centralnej, w tym porównania średnich. Uzyskane wyniki badań wskazują, że środowisko wojskowe mogłoby również zainteresować się młodymi kobietami, które osiągają lepsze wyniki z wychowania fizycznego, a słabsze z zachowania, co może być efektem dorównywania męskim standardom w funkcjonowaniu społecznym, nie dając tym samym młodym mężczyznom uprzywilejowanej pozycji w ubieganiu się o pracę w wojsku. Ponadto bez względu na płeć badanych uczniów szkół średnich ważna jest dla nich rodzina i zdrowie, dlatego też planują oni swoją przyszłość w służbach mundurowych, które w ich poczuciu, zapewnią im ochronę kapitału zdrowotnego oraz rodzinnego. Wyniki badania mogą zostać wykorzystane w działaniach na rzecz rekrutacji ochotników do służby w Siłach Zbrojnych Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej jak i innych krajów Unii Europejskiej.

Słowa kluczowe: młode kobiety, dorastanie, personel mundurowy, płeć w siłach zbrojnych, bezpieczeństwo, edukacja obronna

Introduction

Since the dawn of time, the military has been a predominantly male sphere, both in terms of numbers and the prevailing patterns of behaviour.

The presence of women in the structures of the armed forces was only seen in situations of higher necessity, usually, in cases of insufficient male personnel capable of fighting. In almost every country in the world, gender politics in the armed forces is a clear confirmation of this trend.

When analysing the issue of the perception of gender in the military, it is necessary to start with the question of the perceived role of men and women in society. It should be borne in mind that Poland belongs to the former communist bloc, where social roles were closely linked to gender. In the family, it was the men's role to provide for the material needs, while women were responsible for looking after the children. The professional life of women in post-war Polish society was mainly centred around casual work and their income was quite low, therefore it was only a supplementary part of the household budget.

For the last century or so, in the various countries that were involved in warfare, the social role of women began to rise, slowly shifting from the family sphere to that of public life, and also professional life. This was due to the necessity for women to take paid work in order to support their families while men were away fighting, which was particularly evident during the First and Second World Wars. The critical moment of evolution of the social roles of women was their entry into the sphere of defence and security.

In the Polish Armed Forces, despite the wide involvement of women in World War II, the path to joining military units was closed to women shortly after the end of hostilities. This situation lasted until 1988, when women were allowed to join the services on a special basis, which in practice was limited to medical and psychological groups. These restrictions were not lifted until 1999, when Poland joined the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO). NATO standards did not provide for gender discrimination in military service, therefore a formal change was needed, as a consequence of which women were given broader access to military service. From then on, they began to appear in increasing numbers among the ranks of the armed forces.

Currently, women make up 5.98% of the entire Polish Armed Forces,¹ which in numerical terms amounts to 7,915 individuals. In addition, there are 917 women in candidate service; after completing military schools,

¹ <https://www.gov.pl/web/obrona-narodowa/sluzba-wojskowa-kobiet-w-silach-zbrojnych-rp-wczoraj-i-dzis> (access: 12.05.2023).

they will most probably join the ranks of the armed forces. There are also female students of coeducational uniformed classes in secondary schools. This term is used in Poland to describe secondary school classes that follow a broadly understood security education programme, expanded with topics related to national defence, the history of the Polish Armed Forces and strengthening the patriotic mindset of children and youth. It is likely that within several years, the students of these Polish uniformed classes will join the Polish uniformed organizations, including the Armed Forces.

In view of the foregoing considerations, the aim of this article is to show the results of studies on the role of defence education in creating the social potential for developing coeducational uniformed staff in Poland. In order to achieve this goal, a literature review on the social potential for developing coeducational personnel is first presented. Afterwards, the study method is described, and the collected results are presented. Empirical results relate to the academic performance and future plans as well as values and goals of Polish uniformed class students. They constitute the social capital of the developing coeducational uniformed staff. Therefore, at the end of the article, the presented study results are compared with others that cover the presented topic.

The Social Potential for Developing Coeducational Staff – A Literature Review

In recent years, there has been an increase in the number of studies on gender issues in social life. This is connected to the change in the role of women in society and the perception of the potential of women in the labour market.² Although they constitute a peculiar professional environment, uniformed services are no exception in this regard.³

There are many areas in the society that are dominated by a single gender. In recent years, therefore, there has been an increase in the number of sociological analyses that explore such areas in the vein of

² P.N. Stearns, *Gender in World History*, 4th Edition, Routledge, New York 2021.

³ B. Drapikowska, *Gender and Security – Female Military Service in Social Perspective – History, Present Days, Law and Communication*, Proceedings of the World Conference on Women's Studies, 2018, Vol. 3, Issue 2, pp. 18–29.

gender studies.⁴ For example, interesting analyses in this regard have been carried out by Julia Mcquillan, Nestor Hernandez⁵ in academia and, more specifically, in the natural sciences, which, like the armed forces, are dominated by men. Equally interesting relationships between gender and professional life were found in medicine. The analyses conducted in this regard by Glenda M. Flores, Maricela Bañuelos⁶ indicate that gender is a factor that inhibits women's progress in medicine.

Family roles have always been more the more important domain for women than men; this has not lost its relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic. According to the studies by Allison Dunatchik, Kathleen Gerson, Jennifer Glass, Jerry A. Jacobs, Haley Stritzel,⁷ in the case of U.S. families, there was a persistent gender disparity in participation in household chores during the pandemic, as well as regarding the need to take care of children while schools were closed. 79% of mothers, compared to 28% of fathers, said that they were the main person responsible for housework during the pandemic. Likewise, 66% of mothers, compared to 24% of fathers, declared that they were primarily responsible for childcare. Similar results were obtained by Barbara J. Risman and Julia Mcquillan⁸ in their study on the work and family situation of American families, where the main study focus was on families from different racial groups.

The matter of occupational disparities that are indicative of differences in rates of job loss between men and women due to the COVID-19 pandemic was also highlighted in the study by Caitlyn Collins, Leah Ruppanner, Liana Christin Landivar, and William J. Scarborough,⁹ who argue that school closures have temporarily excluded women from the

⁴ A. Jaunait, *Investigating gender in a world of gender consciousness*, "Bulletin of Sociological Methodology/Bulletin de Méthodologie Sociologique" 2022, Vol. 153, Issue 1, pp. 8–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/07591063211061759>.

⁵ J. Mcquillan, N. Hernandez, *Real-Life Conundrums in the Struggle for Institutional Transformation*, "Gender & Society" 2021, Vol. 35, Issue 3, pp. 300–329, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211013147>.

⁶ G.M. Flores, M. Bañuelos, *Gendered Deference: Perceptions of Authority and Competence among Latino Physicians in Medical Institutions*, "Gender & Society" 2021, Vol. 35, Issue 1, pp. 110–135, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0891243220979655>.

⁷ A. Dunatchik, K. Gerson, J. Glass, et al., *Gender, Parenting, and The Rise of Remote Work During the Pandemic: Implications for Domestic Inequality in the United States*, "Gender & Society" 2021, Vol. 35, Issue 2, pp. 194–205, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001301>.

⁸ B.J. Risman, J. Mcquillan, *What does the Research Teach Feminists about the Possibility of Organizational Change?*, "Gender & Society" 2021, Vol. 35, Issue 3, pp. 297–299, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211012578>.

⁹ C. Collins, L. Ruppanner, L. Christin Landivar, et al., *The Gendered Consequences of a Weak Infrastructure of Care: School Reopening Plans and Parents' Employment During the COVID-19 Pandemic*, "Gender & Society" 2021, Vol. 35, Issue 2, pp. 180–193, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001300>.

possibility of paid work due to their childcare obligations, and that this in turn may lead to more permanent exclusion of women in the future.

When discussing gender issues in professional life, and in this case in the armed forces, one should bear in mind that the armed forces are inextricably associated with aggression, which is attributed only to males.¹⁰ Interesting insights on this issue are provided by the findings of Robert Faris and Diane Felmlee,¹¹ who concluded that aggression is dependent not only of the person's gender, but also of their relationship with the other gender and gender-segregated patterns at school. The authors put forth the following argument: When cross-gender interactions are plentiful, aggression is diminished. It can therefore be speculated that education in coeducational uniformed classes can become a factor promoting non-violent methods of dispute resolution, which is undoubtedly a desirable skill for during modern military missions and operations.

Delving deeper into gender studies, it is worth citing the findings of Mark Ogilvie and Mark McCormack¹² regarding the importance of coeducational training for team sports. Sports, like the military, has a long history of excluding women with the key argument in both cases being physical aptitude. The authors based their conclusions on a study conducted in British universities. They investigated "gender-collaborative training;" differences in the narratives of those who trained in mixed- and single-gender training groups were already evident at the stage of conducting the study. The former group exhibited fewer sexist phrases and associations in their narratives. These studies are encouraging, as they suggest that mixed training units in the military, such as those at the stage of uniformed classes, may contribute to the elimination of sexist prejudices in later service. This thesis was partially confirmed by Barbara Drapikowska's study,¹³ which indicated that soldiers who served with women in military schools were less prejudiced against them in their later service.

Interesting results in the context of the importance of gender in professional life are provided by the study by Torsten Lietzmann and

¹⁰ M.P. Ghiglieri, *The Dark Side of Man: Tracing the Origins of Violence*, Reading, Perseus Publishing 1999.

¹¹ R. Faris, D. Felmlee, *Status Struggles: Network Centrality and Gender Segregation in Same- and Cross-Gender Aggression*, "American Sociological Review" 2011, Vol. 76, Issue 1, pp. 48–73, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0003122410396196>.

¹² M. Ogilvie, M. McCormack, *Gender-collaborative training in elite university sport: Challenging gender essentialism through integrated training in gender-segregated sports*, "International Review for the Sociology of Sport" 2021, Vol. 56, Issue 8, pp. 1172–1188, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1012690220980149>.

¹³ B. Drapikowska, *Participation of women in creating security – Polish Armed Forces as an example*, "Defense Resources Management in the 21st Century" 2018, Vol.13, Issue 13, pp. 145–160.

Corinna Frodermann,¹⁴ who presented the issue of gender differences in work roles using the German labour market as an example. Their findings indicate that the labour market behaviour of women and men depends on their attitudes towards female and male gender roles. The researchers found that while single men and women do not differ significantly in terms of likelihood of employment, women in relationships were less active in the labour market than men. Additionally, the employment gap is the largest for couples with children. It is also significant that egalitarian attitudes among women are a factor contributing to their full-time employment.

The issues of gender differences in the labour market in the context of equal pay have been analysed quite thoroughly by Anne-Kathrin Kronberg.¹⁵ The research she cited shows the existence of significant differences between the decision-makers' beliefs about the gender of a given employee and the financial rewards granted to them. Therefore, these studies suggest that there is still a lack of social education on gender equality – both in the formal and the informal context. Irma Mooi-Reci and Barbara J. Risman¹⁶ claim that, sociologists often focus on changing policies as the primary way to change structure, and they often need engaged and supportive administrators to make such changes happen.

Methodology

The study on the social potential for developing coeducational uniformed staff examined the elements of defence education that can be used for future work, especially in the uniformed services. The following dependent variables were examined: academic performance, future plans, values and goals.

In order to examine these dependent variables, the following categories of indicators were used: elements of information contained in the respondents' statements and quantitative (numerical) indicators

¹⁴ T. Lietzmann, C. Frodermann, *Gender Role Attitudes and Labour Market Behaviours: Do Attitudes Contribute to Gender Differences in Employment in Germany?*, "Work, Employment and Society" 2023, Vol. 37, Issue 2, pp. 373–393, <https://doi.org/10.1177/09500170211011318>.

¹⁵ A.K. Kronberg, *Workplace Gender Pay Gaps: Does Gender Matter Less the Longer Employees Stay?*, "Work and Occupations" 2020, Vol. 47, Issue 1, pp. 3–43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0730888419868748>.

¹⁶ I. Mooi-Reci, B.J. Risman, *The Gendered Impacts of COVID-19: Lessons and Reflections*, "Gender & Society" 2021, Vol. 35, Issue 2, pp. 161–167, <https://doi.org/10.1177/08912432211001305>.

resulting from scaling. Gender was used as an independent variable. The elements of information contained in the respondents' responses to the questions in the survey questionnaire's metrics were an indicator for the independent variable.

A diagnostic survey method was used in the research. It was assumed that it would be useful for examining the social potential of students of military classes. Considering the type of variables that this study focused on, the survey technique was used. The survey covered students of military classes in secondary schools in Poland. A scaled survey questionnaire intended for students of military classes was used to provide information on their academic performance, future plans, values and goals. The survey questionnaire for military class students included closed scaled disjunctive questions, semi-open conjunctive questions, and open-ended questions.

The collected empirical material enabled a quantitative univariate analysis, which involves a description of the subject of study in terms of a single variable. Therefore, when analysing the "gender" variable, the percentage of the female and male respondents was determined. Multivariate analyses were also used, which indicated associations between the independent variable and the dependent variables. Therefore, they determined the respondent's gender for the most frequently given answers.

Correlations were not calculated from the collected empirical material due to the fact that the study sample was not representative, and it was not possible to calculate binding statistical relationships. Therefore, in addition to simple descriptions of the overall distribution of responses, the collected empirical material was statistically processed by means of attendance and measures of central tendency, including a comparison of mean values.

Attendance is the percentage of people who attended a given event or represent a given position as a proportion of the number of people who attended a given event or represent all positions. It indicates the frequency of occurrence of a given computational unit in a given set.

Measures of central tendency involve the use of closed scaled questions in the survey questionnaire to assess the defence potential of military class students, which allowed the calculation of arithmetic means, the result of which is obtained by dividing the sum of the values by the total number of cases. The study also used an advanced measure of central tendency, which is a comparison of means.

Both quantitative and qualitative analysis were used in the study. Quantitative analysis allowed an objective presentation of the findings using deductive reasoning. The formulated conclusions were logically derived from specific premises and the findings were presented in the form of systematic calculations.

The qualitative analysis, on the other hand, required the researchers to be able to compound statements of the respondents as multi-threaded sources of information. They were linked with the social context and emotional state of the study subjects. These aspects were required for proper organisation the collected data, taken from the transcriptions of the respondents' responses. It involved inductive reasoning to discover regularities.

In view of the subject of the study, which is the process of creating the social potential for developing coeducational uniformed staff in Poland, the study covered students of military classes who pursue defence education in Polish secondary schools. The education involves following the secondary school curriculum in parallel with an additional programme that includes theoretical and practical military material.¹⁷

The selection of the military class students surveyed using the survey questionnaire was both intentional and incidental. The adoption of this criterion for the selection of the study sample was dictated by the fact that the only schools that were selected were the schools with a defence education as part of innovative programs that do not participate in the Ministry of Defence *Military Education* subject curriculum for secondary schools. Additionally, only classes whose teachers consented to the participation of students took part in the study. This significantly limited the selection of respondents. These limitations meant that 430 students from 24 military classes in Poland were included in the study.¹⁸ Therefore, it was a pilot study.

¹⁷ I. Urych, *Military innovations in secondary schools in Poland as a manifestation of strengthening national security within the meaning of articles 5 and 26 of the Polish Constitution*, "Constitutional Law Review" 2020, No. 6 (58), pp. 461–474, <https://doi.org/10.15804/ppk.2020.06.37>; I. Urych, *Potencjał obronny klas wojskowych. Teoretyczno-empiryczne aspekty kształcenia obronnego*, Wydawnictwo Naukowe Akademii Sztuki Wojennej, Warsaw 2019.

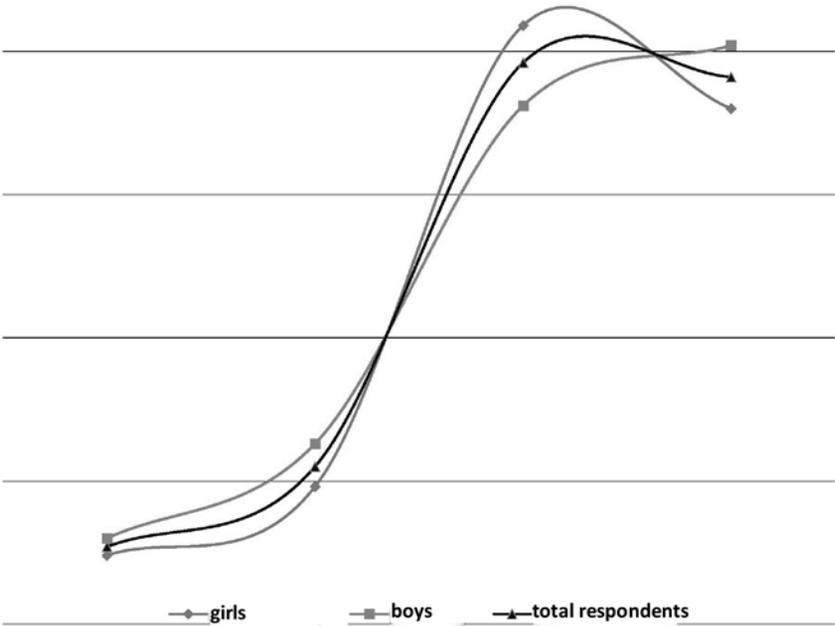
¹⁸ In January 2022, there were around 2,000 uniformed classes in 580 secondary schools in Poland, with 57,000 students.

Empirical Results

Academic Performance and Future Plans

Academic performance, as declared by students of military classes, illustrating their intellectual predispositions, predilections, abilities and motivations, was examined on the basis of the respondents' opinions about their academic performance that were obtained in the course of the study. The arithmetic means of the subjects' self-reported academic performance were then compared with the independent variable – gender. The arithmetic mean of the relationship between the respondents' gender and their self-assessment of their academic performance is presented in Chart 1.

Chart 1. Gender of the respondents and their self-assessment of the academic performance at the time of the survey¹⁹



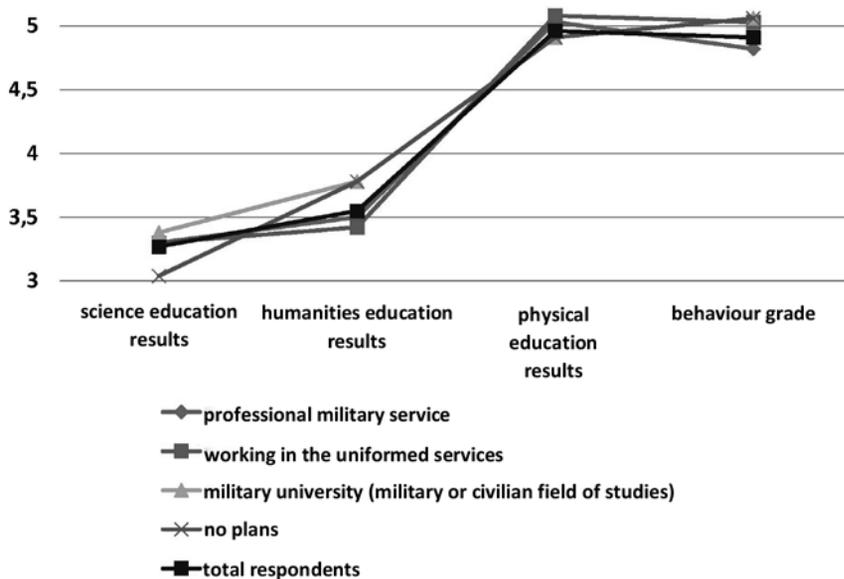
Source: own research.

¹⁹ This assessment uses the school grading scale.

The data in Chart 1 demonstrates that the academic performance of military class students varies by gender. It can be pointed out that the surveyed boys report that they score slightly higher in humanities and behaviour, and girls – slightly higher in physical education. These are differences oscillating between 0.2 and 0.3 of a grade.

The arithmetic mean of the relationship between the respondents' future plans and their self-assessment of their academic performance is shown in Chart 2.

Chart 2. Respondents' future plans and their self-assessment of academic performance²⁰



Source: own research

An analysis of the data presented in Chart 2 indicates that the respondents' future plans are dependent on their academic performance. Those students who plan to study at a military university score slightly higher in science and humanities. The surveyed students who are considering a career in the uniformed services score minimally higher in physical education and behaviour and minimally lower in humanities.

²⁰ This assessment uses the school grading scale.

The academic performance of military class students planning a professional military career is very similar to the average of the total respondents.

The self-assessment of the surveyed students of military classes regarding their academic performance shows better results:

- in physical education among girls, first year students and residents of rural areas, and those who plan a career in the uniformed services,
- in behaviour among boys,
- in humanities and science among those students who plan to study at a military university (both military and civilian fields of study).

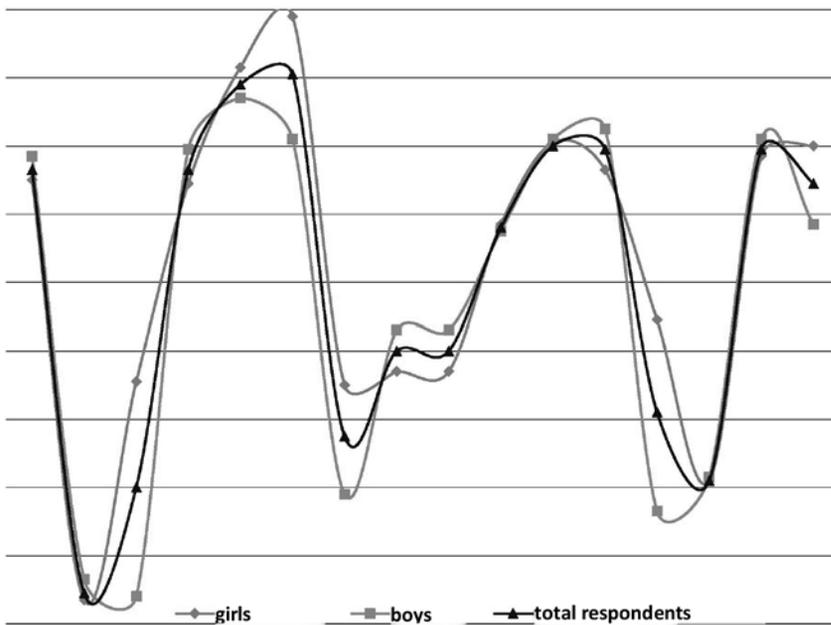
The following trends can be distinguished in the analysis of the self-assessment of the academic performance of military class students:

- the respondents' answers varied by gender;
- the surveyed girls scored higher than boys in physical education, but lower than boys in behaviour, which may be the result of attempting to match male social standards.

Values and Goals

The characterisation of the personal values of military class students was carried out by comparing the arithmetic means of the level of interest of the respondents in the listed values, with the “gender” as the independent variable (Chart 3.).

Chart 3. Gender of the respondents and level of interest in specific values²¹



Source: own research.

Key:

- A. Food
- B. Alcohol
- C. Sexual life
- D. Comfort, convenience
- E. Health
- F. Physical fitness
- G. Business, enterprise
- H. Creativity
- I. Knowledge
- J. Living with one's own family
- K. Social life
- L. DIY
- Ł. Television, radio, press

²¹ The categories of interest levels were assigned the following numerical values: 4 – high interest, 3 – medium interest, 2 – low interest, 1 – no interest.

M. Internet

N. Homeland, patriotism

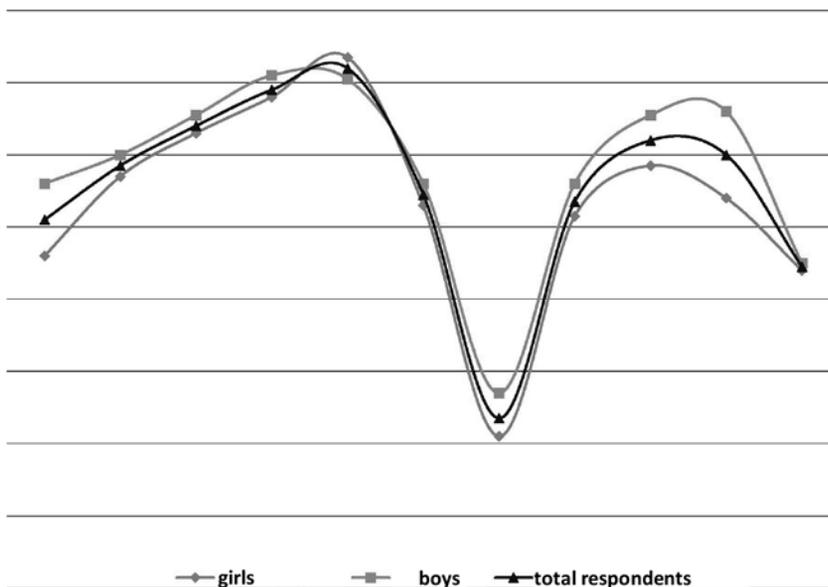
O. Security, defence

The analysis of the data in Chart 3 shows that the gender of the respondents is a differentiating factor with respect to their level of interest in the listed values. It can be pointed out that the surveyed girls are more interested than boys in such issues as: sexual life, health, physical fitness, security and defence. The interest in these values among the surveyed girls is also higher than the average of all respondents. In contrast, the boys surveyed are more interested than the girls in such things as: food, comfort and convenience, creativity, knowledge and DIY.

Analysing the interest of the surveyed military class students in specified issues related to the public sphere, a certain trend can be identified – the answers of the respondents were differentiated by gender. The study shows that girls are interested in those public sphere issues that serve their emotional and social needs, which is not in the central sphere of interest of boys.

Analysis of the study results also made it possible to determine the arithmetic mean that shows the relationship between the respondents' gender and their attitude towards the listed goals, as presented in Chart 4.

Chart 4. Gender of respondents and their attitude towards the listed goals²²



Source: own research.

Key:

- A. Good school grades
- B. Good behaviour
- C. Work and sacrifice for the family
- D. Family happiness
- E. Health and fitness
- F. Work and good management
- G. Salvation of one's soul
- H. Comfortable life
- I. Peace and quiet in local environment
- J. Helping other people
- K. Recognition in the community

Based on the data in Chart 4, it should be concluded that the gender of the respondents differentiates their attitudes towards the listed goals.

²² Students stated the significance according to the following scale: 4 – high importance, 3 – medium importance, 2 – low importance, 1 – no importance.

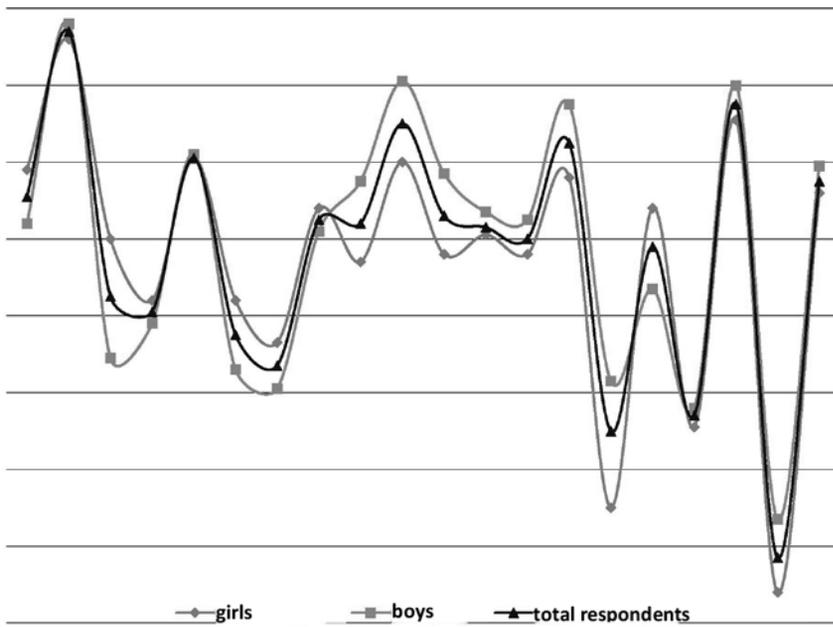
Compared to the respondents as a whole, health and fitness are more important to girls than boys, and good school grades, good behaviour, work and sacrifice for the family, family happiness, comfortable life, peace and quiet in local environment and helping other people are more important to boys than girls.

Furthermore, the study shows that the respondents' career plans are a differentiating factor for their attitudes towards the listed goals. The students planning professional military service valued higher such goals as health and fitness. The respondents considering a career in the uniformed services were more interested in achieving goals such as good behaviour, work and sacrifice for family, family happiness, helping other people and recognition in the community. Respondents who planned to study at a military university were more interested in earning good school grades.

When analysing the attitude of the surveyed military students to the listed goals, it should be pointed out that the participant's responses were differentiated by gender – the interest of boys in the listed goals was in most cases greater than that of girls. There was also great consistency in upward and downward trends among the responses of girls and boys. However, regardless of gender, paid work is outside the sphere of interest of the surveyed youth. Furthermore, family and health are important to the respondents regardless of their gender, which is why they plan their future in the uniformed services, which, according to them, can safeguard their health and family capital.

Furthermore, the arithmetic means relating to universal values in the context of the respondents' value system were compared with their gender (Chart 5.).

Chart 5. Gender of respondents and their relation to universal values in the context of their value system²³



Source: own research.

Key:

- A. National security (protection against invasion)
- B. Family security (caring for family members)
- C. Mature love (sexual and spiritual intimacy)
- D. Prosperous life (good material status)
- E. Wisdom (mature understanding of life)
- F. Local patriotism (attachment to the place of birth and upbringing)
- G. Sense of achievement (making a lasting contribution)
- H. Self-esteem (self-respect)
- I. World peace (a world free of wars and conflicts)
- J. True friendship (close companionship)
- K. Pleasure (enjoyment, no rush)
- L. Internal balance (absence of internal conflicts)
- M. Equality (fraternity, equal opportunities for all)

²³ The categories were assigned the following numerical values: 1 – not important, 2 – not very important, 3 – moderately important, 4 – important, 5 – very important.

- N. Happiness (joy, contentment)
- O. World of beauty (beauty of nature and art)
- P. Love of the homeland (patriotism)
- Q. Social recognition (respect, admiration)
- R. Freedom (personal independence, freedom of choice)
- S. Salvation (of the soul, eternal life)
- T. A life full of excitement (full of adrenaline and action)

The data presented in Chart 5 indicate that the gender of the respondents differentiates their relation to universal values in the context of the value system. Compared to the sum of all respondents, boys are more aware of the importance of world peace, true friendship, pleasure, inner balance, equality and happiness, while girls are more aware of the importance of mature love, local patriotism, sense of achievement and love of the homeland.

The multiplicity and diversity of opinions should be emphasised when analysing the self-awareness of the surveyed students of military classes in relation to universal values in the context of their value systems. However, certain trends can be identified:

- gender differentiates the way respondents refer to universal values in terms of their personal value system;
- for women, family-related values, i.e. those traditionally and stereotypically attributed to women, are more important, and for men – the values stereotypically attributed to men.

Discussion

The study found that young people assess their academic performance differently depending on their gender. More specifically, boys report that they score slightly higher in humanities and behaviour, and girls – slightly higher in physical education. It should be pointed out in this case that many studies confirm the general trend that girls achieve better academic results than boys in the overall assessment. For example, in the United States, Katharin Peter et al.²⁴ demonstrated that higher grades are

²⁴ K. Peter, L. Horn, C.D. Carroll, *Gender differences in participation and completion of undergraduate education and how they have changed over time*, U.S. Department of Education 2005, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubs2005/2005169.pdf> (access: 19.05.2023).

more often the domain of girls than boys.²⁵ Similarly, in the UK, a study by Angela Hung et al.²⁶ provides results that girls perform better at every level of education, from primary school through to the university level. The same applies to German youth.²⁷ Interestingly, this trend has also been confirmed in Japan, where the difference between the academic performance of both groups is visible in studies and public discourse,²⁸ which, however, may be surprising given the lower social position of women in that country.

It is worth noting, however, that many studies prove the existence of gender differences when considering self-esteem, which in the case of school youth may also include academic performance. In other words, men tend to score higher in terms of self-esteem. Wiebke Bleidron et al.²⁹ conducted a study in 48 countries on people aged 16–45. Their results show that men of all ages tend to have higher self-esteem than women around the world.

The study also showed that young people have different interests according to their gender. More specifically, girls are more interested than boys in such issues as sexual life, health, physical fitness, security and defence. In contrast, the boys surveyed are more interested than the girls in such things as food, comfort and convenience, creativity, knowledge and DIY. Initially, one may be puzzled by such a strong interest of boys in the social issue of food. But further reflection, however, brings more clarity, since – for biological reasons – the teenage years are a time when the males undergo major physical changes in terms of body composition, which goes hand in hand with increased food consumption, and this in

²⁵ T.D. Snyder, C. de Brey, S.A. Dillow, *Digest of Education Statistics 2016*, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education 2018, <https://nces.ed.gov/pubns2017/2017094.pdf> (access: 20.05.2023).

²⁶ A. Hung, J. Yoong, E. Brown, *Empowering Women Through Financial Awareness and Education*, “OECD Working Papers on Finance, Insurance and Private Pensions” 2012, No. 14, OECD Publishing, pp. 1–42. <https://doi.org/10.1787/5k9d5v6kh56g-en>.

²⁷ W. Allen, *The Color of Success: African-American College Student Outcomes at Predominantly White and Historically Black Public Colleges and Universities*, “Harvard Educational Review” 1992, Vol. 62, Issue 1, pp. 26–45, <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.62.1.wv5627665007v701>.

²⁸ R. Ullah, H. Ullah, *Boys versus girls’ educational performance: Empirical evidences from global north and global south*, “African Educational Research Journal” 2019, Vol. 7, Issue 4, pp. 163–167, <https://doi.org/10.30918/AERJ.74.19.036>.

²⁹ W. Bleidorn, R.C. Arslan, J.A. Denissen, et al., *Age and Gender Differences in Self-Esteem – A Cross-Cultural Window*, “Journal of Personality and Social Psychology” 2016, Vol. 111, Issue 3, pp. 396–410, <https://doi.org/10.1037/pspp0000078>.

turn is justified by their higher intake demand during adolescence.³⁰ Therefore, interest in this issue seems to be a natural developmental element. The results are also puzzling in the context of sexual interests, which, according to the study, are more prevalent among girls than boys. Stereotypically, men are the gender that is thought to be more interested in sexual matters. Similarly, the results of the CBOS survey³¹ also show that 61% of boys and 45% of girls surveyed have already had sexual experiences, and the age of initiation that is most often indicated for both sexes is 17 years. Another interesting thing are the results of the report in terms of the attitude that sex requires neither love nor marriage and can be reduced to casual contacts: almost half the boys surveyed (47%), and only one in five girls surveyed (21%) agreed with that viewpoint.

Interests also influence life goals, which in turn influence further aspirations. The results of the study provide evidence that the gender of the respondents differentiates their attitudes towards the listed goals. For example, health and fitness are more important to girls than boys, and good school grades, good behaviour, work and sacrifice for the family, family happiness, comfortable life, peace and quiet in local environment and helping other people are more important to boys than girls.

On the other hand, different conclusions are indicated by Boguszeński's study,³² which indicates that for girls the most important values and life goals are love and friendship (58%), successful family life and children (48%), interesting work consistent with their interests (45%). On the other hand, for boys the triad of key aspirations was as follows: love, friendship (39%), successful family life and having children (37%) and, to an equal extent, gaining wealth and achieving a high material status (37%).

As a result of the present study, the following conclusions and recommendations concerning defence education in creating the social potential for developing coeducational uniformed staff in Poland were formulated, as outlined above. They are also important because of the possibilities of profiling young people with regard to their further professional work. Such activities are especially important in the age of adolescence, when

³⁰ L. Wądołowska, *Żywnościowe podłoże zagrożeń zdrowia w Polsce*, Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Warmińsko-Mazurskiego w Olsztynie, Olsztyn 2010.

³¹ CBOS, *Aktywność Polaków w organizacjach obywatelskich*, Research communiqué no. 13/2016, https://www.cbos.pl/SPISKOM.POL/2016/K_013_16.PDF (access: 20.05.2023).

³² *Ibidem*.

a young person needs both support and direction that will use his potential.

The military community could also become interested in young women who, as shown by the analysis of the presented study results, achieve higher results in physical education. They also score lower in behaviour; therefore, it should be remembered not to attribute the stereotypical traits of subservience and submissiveness to girls. Those who took part in the survey, compared to boys, score higher in physical education and lower in behaviour, which may be a result of attempting to match the male social standards to deny young men their privileged position in applying for military jobs. Furthermore, family and health are important to the surveyed secondary school students regardless of their gender, which is why they plan their future in the uniformed services, which, according to them, can safeguard their health and family capital. This knowledge can be used in efforts to recruit volunteers to serve in the Polish Armed Forces.

The results of the study may be useful in the future to develop further gender studies in the Polish Armed Forces. There is no doubt that this issue should be observed and analysed by researchers. Similar studies in other European countries should also be considered.

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