

# MANAGERIAL CHALLENGES IN CHOOSING A MILITARY CAREER

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**Abstract:** *The Romanian Army needs a sufficient number of young individuals, strongly motivated for a military career, deeply committed to national values, and possessing an attitudinal profile that aligns with the performance standards required by established missions. This is because the profession of a soldier is robust and offers a future full of opportunities to those who choose it, and the military institution has the capacity to strengthen its position in the professional and educational offerings market. One of the essential missions of the Romanian Army is to identify the target audience compatible with the military institution in terms of aptitude and motivation, individuals who have a favorable attitude towards it or demonstrate interest or affinity for the military domain.*

**Keywords:** *military profession, management, candidates, Z generation*

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## 1. Introduction

"Organizations select candidates for a position not only based on their ability to perform the work but also due to their value system, which is compatible with the organization's ideology. Recruitment is part of those

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devices that allow strengthening identification with the organization's ideology" (Mintzberg, 1986).

Starting from Mintzberg's words, "recruitment" is a natural stage in the process of developing strategy and human resource planning. It represents a fundamental stage in personnel assurance, requiring special techniques, and the quality of recruitment conditions the future performance of the military institution (Alexandrescu, 2010, p. 7-8).

Recruitment is a process of searching, identifying, locating, and attracting potential candidates from which the most competitive individuals will be selected, aligning with the requirements and interests of the military.

Furthermore, recruitment is a public process through which the offer becomes known to those interested and represents a two-way communication: organization-candidate and candidate-organization.

Recruiting personnel for the needs of the army is a topical subject in the theory and practice of defense human resources management, given the new security environment shaped after the end of the Cold War and the revision of national defense issues. In a period of radical transformations, searches, certainties, but also uncertainties, hopes, and fears regarding the safety of tomorrow, there are factors that drive the young generation to orient themselves toward a military career (Pânzaru, 2008, p.14).

From this perspective, the analysis and redesign of recruitment and selection marketing (promotion of the military profession, recruitment, selection, and training) for military profession candidates represent a priority in the succession of stages of human resources reform in the Romanian Army.

Understanding the characteristics and specifics of potential candidates, their aspirations and needs, criteria for selecting educational and professional offerings, as well as emotional or rational factors influencing their expectations, are essential conditions for success in promoting the military profession.

Most of the candidates in the coming years will come from Generation Z, representing young people born from 1997 onward, and partly from

Generation Y, i.e., those born between 1981-1996. Generation Z, also called digital natives, consists of individuals who have grown up with mobile technology and social media platforms. Their values include diversity, multiculturalism, professional mobility, internal or external migration for studies, work, or a better life.

Global studies conducted in recent years, including some that included Romania, have revealed that these young people are bold, realistic, flexible, lack patience, want everything immediately, quickly inform themselves without delving too deeply or analyzing too much. At the same time, the new generation is concerned about economic, social, and political developments, environmental destruction, and pollution. They are anxious, depressed, insecure, and pessimistic about the evolution of society, their careers, and their future<sup>3</sup>. Among their top priorities are travel, improving income, and acquiring a home.

## **2. Challenges of the Z Generation**

A study<sup>4</sup> has highlighted that young people from Generation Z prefer to isolate themselves in a safe environment, spending their time in the virtual world, which they find more controllable and enjoyable than the real world, which causes discomfort and insecurity. According to the same study, urban youth believe that the job of the future is a robot builder, followed by a specialist in digital media (influencer, vlogger, YouTuber). Most digital natives want a flexible schedule and mobile offices so they can work from anywhere, anytime. They also feel the need for freedom and independence and are more vulnerable in situations that require sustained and consistent effort. The main challenge for education systems is to expand learning

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<sup>3</sup> The Deloitte Global Millennial Survey conducted by Deloitte in 2019, with the participation of 3,000 representatives of Generation Z aged between 14 and 21, from 10 countries.

<sup>4</sup> The Kids Future Monitor study conducted by Unlock Market Research among children and young people aged between 9 and 18 in the major cities of Romania.

models that stimulate creativity and entrepreneurial mindset among young people (Dragomir & Mihai, 2021).

Most of the young participants in the study believe that the future is closely tied to technological development, automation, and robotics.

Another study<sup>5</sup> commissioned by Dell Technologies highlighted that most young people aged between 16 and 23 from 17 countries are confident in their digital skills. They aspire to work with cutting-edge technology and see themselves in the role of mentors in the workplace. Furthermore, advanced technology provided by employers is a criterion in the job choice for 91% of young individuals. 82% believe that social media platforms are valuable tools at the workplace, and 80% have stated that technology will create a more equitable work environment, eliminating discrimination.

Notably, unlike other studies, the Dell Technologies study brought out the social aspect, emphasizing the need for human interaction in the workplace. As such, 43% of respondents prefer face-to-face communication, while 21% prefer telephone communication. Additionally, over half of the young individuals prefer going to a workplace where they can interact with their team rather than working from home. According to the mentioned study, in 2020, 20% of the workforce is comprised of Generation Z representatives. Numerous other young people are still in schools and will soon dominate the primary target group, consisting of eligible candidates for military careers. Therefore, it is crucial to understand how they fit into the marketing perspective.

A study<sup>6</sup> conducted by Kantar Millward Brown in 39 countries, including Romania, shows that Generation Z is much more passionate about music and movies compared to previous generations, making ads placed in this context well-received. Although they predominantly use digital channels, over half of these young individuals watch TV programs for at least one hour per day. Digital natives prefer short video clips, and ads

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<sup>5</sup> [https://www.delltechnologies.com/en\\_us/corporate/newsroom/generation-z.html](https://www.delltechnologies.com/en_us/corporate/newsroom/generation-z.html)

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.businesscover.ro/studiu-adreaction-cum-atragem-tinerii-din-generatia-z/>

should not exceed 10 seconds. They do not like their online space to be invaded, so they do not accept pop-ups and ads that cannot be stopped when automatically playing before video clips (non-skippable pre-rolls). Formats such as brand events and social media feeds are more successful than ads.

For an ad to be successful, it must contain music, humor, and celebrities. The aesthetic aspect of the ad also matters, including the use of filters or other graphic artifices, and formats such as Augmented Reality (AR) and Virtual Reality (VR) are highly appreciated.

Another interesting study, recently conducted by Insights PulseZ, shows that over 64% of young people in Romania use Instagram, 50% use YouTube (with boys consuming more content than girls), and TikTok has entered the Top 5 platforms for Generation Z. Regarding work, 53% of young people prefer a flexible job that combines remote work with office work. They expect the first promotion after one year and plan to stay in a company for a maximum of 5 years. The first criterion in choosing a job is to enjoy what they do (77.8%), followed by the team and the atmosphere (43%), and then the salary package. The anxieties of young people are related to health (46%), jobs (32%), money, and professional training.

Even though only 30% of respondents believe that life in Romania will be better in over 10 years, 55% are optimistic about their personal chances in the future. 78% of young people aged 18 to 29 consider themselves patriots (8% very patriotic, 63% patriotic), 23% say they are "not very patriotic," and 6% declare themselves "not patriotic at all."

### **3. Research Methodology**

The most recent study on the attractiveness of the military profession among young people<sup>7</sup> was conducted by the Ministry of National

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<sup>7</sup> <https://www.rbls.ro/studiul-insights-pulsez-2022-efectul-social-media-asupra-generatiei-z-1-din-5-tineri-isi-doreste-sa-devina-celebru/>

Defense in the first part of 2020. The study targeted students in the seventh and eighth grades, aged 13-15, as well as students in the eleventh and twelfth grades, aged 17-19, from across the country. The sociological research, titled "Attractiveness of the Military Profession Among Youth," was conducted from February to March 2020 by the Sociology Service within the General Directorate of Human Resources Management, with the support of the information-recruitment offices in military centers. The method used was a sociological survey based on a questionnaire, focusing on a nationally representative sample consisting of 1,778 students in the last two years of primary and secondary education.

#### **4. Results and discussion**

The most appreciated professions by middle school students are computer scientist/programmer, artist, and equally mentioned are military personnel, doctor, and police officer. They would like stability, professional achievements, and good working conditions in their future profession.

Regarding the high school studies, they intend to pursue, 37% stated that they would choose the mathematics-computer science specialization, while 52% would prefer one of the specializations: philology, natural sciences, and socio-human sciences.

In choosing a high school, students have the greatest trust in the recommendations of teachers and family, meaning that the support group plays a decisive role in the decision to attend the national military college.

As for the intention to study in a national military college, almost 50% have considered this option, and 40% stated that they consider themselves very informed or quite informed about the admission conditions to the national military college.

The main sources of information about the military are relatives and friends (45%), followed at a considerable distance by the Internet (21%) and school (21%).

The most important things in life are family, health, and profession, and success in life is linked to ambition, perseverance, hard work, and intelligence. As expected, most teenagers use the Internet daily, which is the main source of information, spending an average of 242 minutes online. The most used social networks are YouTube (79%) and Instagram (75%).

It should be noted that over 40% of middle school students never listen to the radio, while almost 40% watch TV programs daily, averaging 103 minutes per day. Only a third of these students watch ads, and when they do, they appreciate honesty, a short story, and music.

For 17-18-year-old high school students, the profession of computer scientist/programmer is once again the most highly regarded, but the professions of police officer/gendarme and doctor/pharmacist surpass the military officer, which is equally appreciated as the engineer and psychologist professions. If we refer to the profession they would choose, the ranking changes again, except for the top positions.

And for 17-18-year-old students, job security is the most important thing, followed by working conditions, but obtaining a high income is also highly appreciated.

The main source of information about the profession is the Internet, followed by family and friends, while the influence of teachers is very weak.

It is gratifying that most high school students want to continue their studies after graduation, with 77% opting for university studies.

Regarding the idea of opting for a military career, 61% have considered it. The advantages of the military profession, in the respondents' view, are job security, salary income, retirement age, and the respect of others. The main disadvantages are associated with the risks during missions.

In this case, the surveyed students declare that they are insufficiently or not at all informed about the military profession (63%), and the main source of information is acquaintances (relatives and friends). However, 45% would be interested in obtaining more information.

As in the case of younger peers, the most important things in life are family, profession, and health, and success in life is linked to ambition, perseverance, hard work, and seriousness.

Of course, the main means of information is the Internet, used daily by over 90% of senior high school students, averaging 285 minutes. The most used social networks are YouTube (83%), Instagram (83%), WhatsApp (63%), and Facebook (61%). These young people do not give up on television either; 23% watch daily programs, averaging 78 minutes. Over 30% never listen to the radio.

Most respondents declare that they do not watch programs, especially if they are broadcast on television, but what could attract them to an advertisement is technical achievement, content, humor, and short duration.

In the sense of the above-presented information, Consolidated report with the number of candidates by professional categories, drawn up in 2023 by the Information-Recruitment Office, a specialized structure within the Braşov County Military Center, is enlightening:

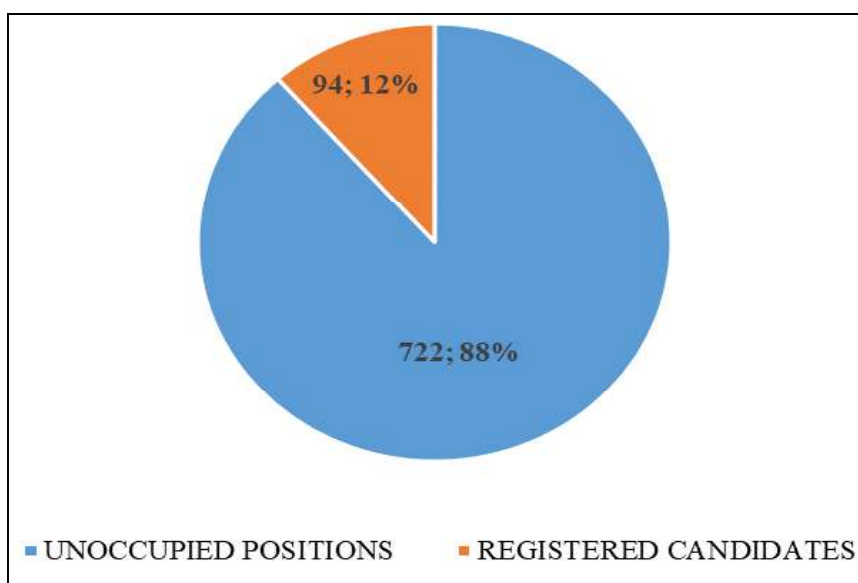
Table no. 1

Consolidated report with the number of candidates  
by professional categories

No.	Level of Studies	Positions	Number of registered candidates	Number of accepted candidates	Number of rejected candidates	Number of with-drawn candidates	Number of registered files
1	Highschool (5 CNM)	816	94	59	31	4	56
2	University (5 IMI)	569 CNM 243	44	24	11	9	22
3	Post highschool MM (5 IMI)	449	5	-	2	3	0
4	Post highschool SOF (4 IMI)	1180	69	30	14	25	28

*Source: Information-Recruitment Office within the Braşov County Military Center*

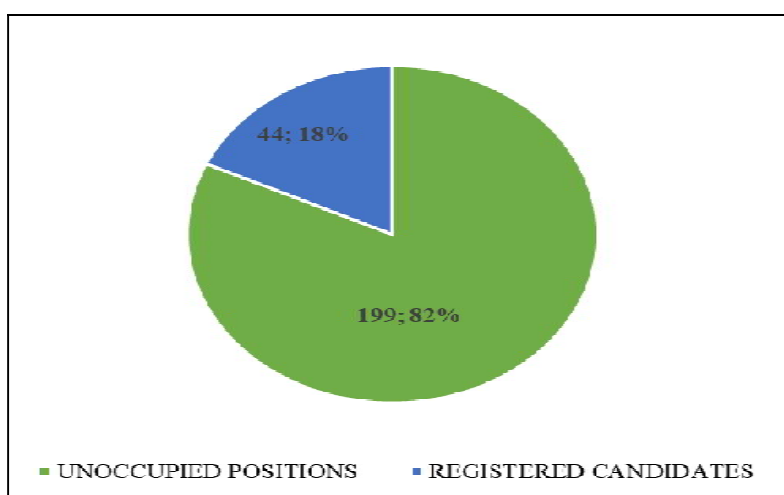




*Figure 1. Consolidated report of the candidates military highschool studies*

*Source: Information-Recruitment Office within the Braşov County Military Center*

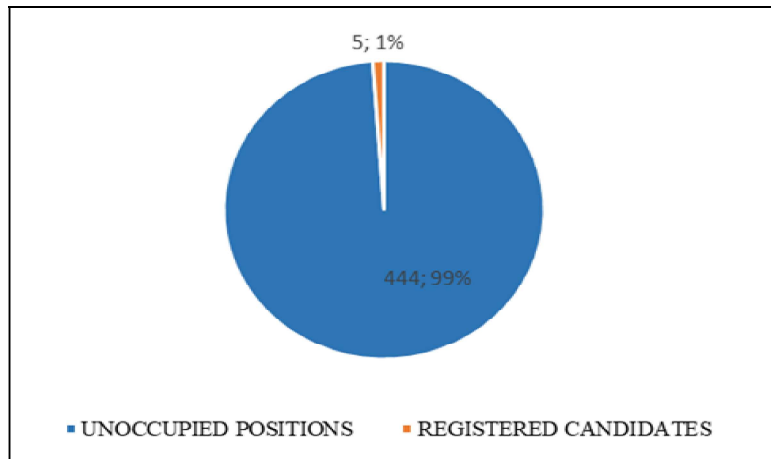
It can be easily observed in the figure presented above that, at the level of the responsibilities of the Information-Recruitment Office Braşov, out of the total of 816 available positions for military high school education, the number of registered candidates was only 94, representing a percentage of 12%.



*Figure 2. Consolidated report of the candidates for military university studies*

*Source: Information-Recruitment Office within the Braşov County Military Center*

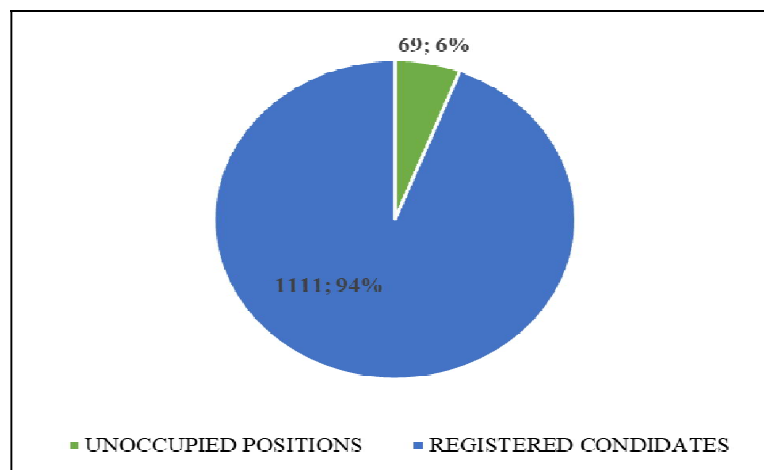
Analyzing the figure presented above, we can observe that an unsatisfactory percentage of 18% of young people from Braşov accessed the university study program.



*Figure 3. Consolidated report of the candidates for post highschool military studies (MM)*

*Source: Information-Recruitment Office within the Braşov County Military Center*

In the same regressive trend, the program dedicated to post-high school military studies is also included, with only a 1% occupancy rate of the places made available by the military institution.



*Figure 4. Consolidated report for post highschool military studies (SOF 4 IMI)*

*Source: Information-Recruitment Office within the Braşov County Military Center*

In a similar regressive trend, the situation of candidates for post-high school studies is also reflected, with a percentage of 6%, namely 69 enrolled candidates out of a total of 1180 vacant positions.

## 5. Conclusions

It is noteworthy that there is a difference between the perception of professions in general and the professions that students would choose for themselves. Referring strictly to the military profession, although it is respected and has a positive image, it does not rank high among professional choices. This situation is an older one, well-known, and we can assume that it is mainly related to the vocational nature of the profession.

A first conclusion would be that there is a satisfactory recruitment pool, but the lack of information or insufficient information disadvantages the military profession in competition with civilian professions. The military should become one of the main sources of information for students, although it cannot entirely replace the family and friends in terms of influence.

The second conclusion refers to the more than hesitant attitude of young people towards advertisements (including those online), television, and radio, which could make it more difficult to convey promotional messages to target groups.

The focal point of promotion will obviously be the Internet, and the "key" to stimulating the receptivity of young people in the target group will be the content of promotional messages and how they are delivered.

Equally important in the activities of recruitment and selection structures is participation in events such as "Job Fairs," "Job Market," and "Workshops," where the military profession is visible and promoted.

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