IMAGE AND ATTRIBUTES OF THE POLICE AS AN EMPLOYER IN POLAND – PERSPECTIVE OF THE Z-GENERATION

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Abstract: *Recruitment to the Police is a continuous process aimed at supplementing the shortage of human resources, whose number for many years has oscillated around 4 thousand. Taking into account the difficulty of obtaining candidates for service, as well as high competitiveness on the labour market among employers, the aim of the conducted research was to identify the quality of the image of the Police as an employer in Poland from the perspective of generation Z, i.e. the group of potential candidates for service. The analysis also focused on the attributes of Police attractiveness, paying particular attention to attractiveness in the economic, developmental and psychological dimensions. An attempt was also made to indicate a typical image of the Police as an employer by means of subjective associations with the brand. For this purpose, potential associations associated with different types of organizational culture were distinguished, and then subjected to the assessment of respondents. The research using a diagnostic survey was conducted on a sample of 100 people in 2019.*

Keywords: image, attributes, employers, Police, generation Z

1. Introduction

The image of an organization plays a number of important roles, determining not only the market position, but also the chances of development of the organization, the ability to achieve its goals, as well as to attract employees with the required level of competence. The Police, considered as a public institution, also take actions aimed at shaping their image, including building their image as an employer. This issue is particularly important from the perspective of the labour market, staff shortages, and thus the competition aimed at attracting talent. Considering the importance of the image of the Police as an employer, the quality and attributes of the image of the Police were analysed from the perspective of generation Z, i.e. from the perspective of potential candidates for service in the Police.

2. Employer image and attractiveness determinants

Well-thought-out and skilful human capital management allows for efficient implementation of objectives, including gaining competitive advantage. The ability to attract and retain employees in the organization for a longer period of time requires the adoption of an action strategy referred to as the employer branding strategy [1]. Employer brand is defined as *the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified in with the employing company* [2]. According to Ambler and Barrow, the organization as an employer has its own personality and image, which translate into the attractiveness of the organization and at the same time determine the nature and quality of relationships and employee engagement. A brand that stands out in the marketplace is

an object of particular interest to certain groups of potential employees, which also determines recruitment effectiveness, turnover and retention rates [3].

The reputation of the organization as an employer is the result of the ability of the organization to create for potential and future employees such working conditions that will allow to meet the needs and aspirations of individuals that translate into efficiency of actions. Employer brand building is based on both internal and external marketing, because how employees testify about the company has a significant impact on the ability to attract future candidates. The quality of the organization's reputation as a place to work is also a result of the pool of values offered to employees referred to as EVP – Employer Value Proposition [4].

The attributes of employer attractiveness may also include developmental, economic and psychological benefits [5]. These factors influence employees' decisions on seeking employment to a different extent, which is related to generational diversity and different needs of particular groups of employees.

3. Generation Z on the labour market – needs and expectations

The labour market includes representatives of the Baby Boomers generation (1946-1964), generation X (1965-1980), generation Y (1981-1997) and generation Z – employees born after 1998. It is worth noting that *generational differences in people's attitudes and values are the result of significant economic, political and social events that they experience during their formative years of childhood* [6]. This is also confirmed by McMullin et al. [7] and Schuman and Scott [8]. The knowledge of needs and expectations of employees from particular generations is important in the context of the labour market and employers' image, while the youngest generation, from which potential candidates for Police service come, deserves special attention. On the Polish labour market, the employees of generation Z constitute a group of 8 mln 697 thousand 936 people, including 3 mln 177

thousand 377 persons aged 18-25 and 5 mln 520 thousand 559 persons aged 26-35. Generation Z accounts for 22.68% of Polish society, including 37.98% of people of working age [9].

Analyzing the typical characteristics of generation Z, S. Ren, Y. Zhu and M. Warner indicate that they are people who pay more attention to fairness and equality in the workplace, tend to reject traditional hierarchy and are supporters of democratic leadership styles [10]. H. Wang, L. Pan and N. Heerink emphasize that generation Z is prone to internal migration, and therefore more mobile than their predecessors, preferring the city as a place of residence, better educated and paying more attention to working conditions [11]. The indicated factors determine not only the image of this group of employees, but above all the directions of their professional choices, which translates into attractiveness of employers.

4. The Police as a public institution and an employer in Poland

The Police is the institution responsible for ensuring security and public order [12] in Poland. The history of Police functioning dates back to 1914 and the establishment of the Civic Committee of the capital city of Warsaw on the territory of the Russian partition, and then the Central Civic Committee within the ranks of which the so-called civic guards were established. These structures were responsible for protection of order, material achievements, life and health, as well as for supporting the population in difficult war conditions [13]. After the lands of the former Kingdom of Poland were occupied by the German and Austrian armies, the Germans dissolved the Civic Guard in 1916, replacing it with the Municipal Militia and then district Police units. In 1917, the Combat Emergency Service was established, which was later transformed into the People's Militia of the Polish Socialist Party [14]. On December 5, 1918, the People's Militia of the Polish Socialist Party was transformed into a Police organ, and then the Main Headquarters and Staff of the People's Militia

of the Polish Socialist Party in Warsaw were created. District, regional (poviat) commands and posts were also established [14]. In 1919, the Municipal Police was established. The functioning of two bodies with similar responsibilities was not conducive to the protection of public order; therefore, actions were undertaken to establish a new formation under the Act of 24 July 1919 on the State Police [15]. In 1938, the State Police consisted of 29 thousand 936 policemen [15]. Recruitment to the Police force was voluntary. Provincial commanders were responsible for hiring regular policemen, whereas the chief commander was responsible for hiring officers [13]. The turbulent times of World War II led to the establishment of the Citizens' Militia (MO) in 1944 [16]. For many years, the Militia was subordinated to various institutions of the state, which was also connected with politicization of the Militia. The key changes took place after the political transformation in 1989 by virtue of the act of April 6, 1990, which came into force on April 10, 1990, the Police was established. Since then, 163 amending acts were introduced, 9 uniform texts and 579 executive acts were published [12].

Reaching for statistical data, one can see how the number of Police officers and civilian employees has changed over the years. Until 2004, statistical yearbooks did not present detailed data on the number of Police officers, as they showed the total number of full-time employees in internal security, so the first detailed data comes from 2005. The staffing of the Police over the period 2005-2019 oscillated between 97.5 thousand officers and 100.7 thousand. In turn, the number of civilian employees ranged from 19.1 to 25.4 thousand. [17]. In order to show the relevance of the Police as an employer, it is worth to mention that comparing 2010 and 2019, the number of employees increased from 15 million 473 thousand to 16 million 467 thousand people. Thus, an increase of 6.42% was recorded, with a noticeable growth in the number of both male and female employees. The Police as an employer hires 0.75% of all employees in Poland [18]. This percentage

would be higher, however, staff shortages in the Police Force can be seen happening for years (Table 1).

Table 1 Vacancies in the Police

Year	Full-time jobs	Employment	Vacancies	Vacancies (%)
2010	102,309	97,416	4,893	4.78
2011	102,309	97,366	4,943	4.83
2012	102,309	96,225	6,084	5.95
2013	102,309	97,697	4,612	4.51
2014	102,309	98,804	3,505	3.43
2015	102,309	98,843	3,466	3.39
2016	102,309	99,938	2,371	2.32
2017	103,309	98,721	4,588	4.44
2018	103,309	98,711	4,598	4.45
2019	103,309	98,820	4,489	4.35

Source: *Liczba policjantów w polskiej Policji – fakty*. 12.01.2021. Available from: <http://policja.pl>.

Over the 10 years (2010-2019), the least vacancies were recorded in 2016 – only 2.32% which was 2 thousand 371 vacant positions, while the most vacancies were recorded in 2012. At that time, 6 thousand 84 positions were vacant which accounted for 5.95% of the full-time status [17].

The Police constantly undertake activities aimed at supplementing the full-time posts, but the noticeable shortages are not only a result of the extensive recruitment process but also of the age structure of Police officers (39.56% of Police officers are over 41 years of age, in most cases already having retirement rights), which is also reflected in the number of officers who leave the service each year.

Over the years 2010-2019, 45 thousand 288 officers were admitted to service, with the most admissions in 2015 – 5 thousand 787 and the least in 2015 – 3 thousand 033. During this time, a total of 45 thousand 350 officers left the service which shows that despite recruitment efforts, it is not possible to fill all vacancies. The recruitment turnover rate in 2019 was 0.44 and the recruitment success rate reached 0.45. There is no shortage of applicants willing to serve in the Police Department. In 2018 17 thousand 660 people applied for admission to the Police (4 candidates per place), and 13 thousand 186 people were rejected for various reasons,

which means that only one in 5 candidates obtained employment [17].

The Police recruitment process consists of a number of stages that allow for a complete verification of candidates' aptitudes and motivations. An important stage in the Police selection process is both the verification of a candidate by checking the accuracy of the information provided by him/her as well as a physical fitness test and a psychological test. The whole process ends with issuing a decision on accepting the candidate for service, followed by basic training and a month and a half of adaptation service. Officers are employed in preparatory service for a period of 3 years, and then they are appointed permanently.

5. Research methodology and sample structure

The research process utilized the method of diagnostic survey carried out by means of the questionnaire technique (PAPI). The main research problem was formulated as a question: *What is the image and attributes of the Police as an employer in Poland in the opinion of the representatives of generation Z?* The opinions of the youngest generation, and at the same time potential candidates for the service, were analyzed. The research involved 100 students of a military university studying for a civilian degree, 62.87% of whom declared their willingness to apply for a job in uniformed services, of which 16.39% indicated the choice of the Police as their future employer. The respondents included 59% women and 41% men aged between 20 and 35. The results of the research were analyzed using statistica.pl program, which allowed for a broad exploration of the data.

6. Results of the research

According to the research results, a general positive image of the Police was declared by 17% of respondents, while a negative image was declared by 66% of respondents. The quality of the general image is also connected with the social perspective on the value of Police officers' work and treating service as

a vocation. In the opinion of 65% of the respondents, the society does not appreciate the officers' service, while only 22% recognise that they serve by vocation. The indicated results correspond also with the image of the Police as an employer. According to 21% of the respondents the Police is a good employer, 32% expressed the opposite opinion. Taking into account the fact that the key factor in choosing an employer is the amount of remuneration offered, the respondents were asked whether the officers are adequately rewarded for their work. Only 26% of the respondents chose rather yes and definitely yes answers. Therefore, it is worth pointing out the issue of Police officers' salary amounting on average to PLN 4 thousand 591 [19], which is lower by 19.45% as compared to the market rates, because according to the announcement of the President of the Central Statistical Office the average gross salary in the enterprise sector in November 2020 amounted to PLN 5 thousand 484.07 [20].

During the conducted research, the respondents were also asked whether women should work in the Police. In this respect, 79% of the respondents expressed a positive opinion, while only 11% of the respondents were of an opposite opinion. It should be noted that 2% of women and 9% of men were against women serving in the Police. Therefore, it can be concluded that women's service in the Police is slowly finding social acceptance, which also results in an increase in the number of women in the Police. According to the state as of November 01, 2020, 16 thousand 363 women found employment in the Police, of which 15 thousand 550 women served in garrisons, 201 ladies served in Police schools, the Police Training Center and the Police Academy, and 99 policewomen were employed in the Police Central Investigation Bureau and the Police Headquarters [21].

During the study, the respondents were also asked about their knowledge of Police recruitment rules, which was confirmed by only 10% of the respondents. However, this did not prevent 39% of the respondents to indicate that they have predispositions to

serve. The difficulty of the Police recruitment process was also analyzed - 24% of the respondents indicated the difficulty of the selection process, while 53% of the respondents were of the opposite opinion.

The attractiveness of the Police as an employer was also verified by analyzing the working conditions offered by the Police. According to the results of the research, the key factors of attractiveness of the Police as an employer can be divided into two groups: factors related to working conditions (possibility of early retirement 66%, stability of employment 60%, clear career path 43%, continuous improvement of competences 38%) and type of work performed (possibility of helping others 55%, content of work 44%).

The attractiveness of the image of the Police as an employer is considered and evaluated holistically by analyzing the subjective associations associated with the organization as confirmed by Collins and Kanar: *subjective evaluations of the attractiveness of a brand' expressed through 'surface brand associations'* [22], therefore, potential attributes of Police image were also analyzed.

The Police are above all considered to be an organization dedicated to men (75%), backed by the authorities (66%), bureaucratic (59%), a place of work for a select few (59%), static (not subject to frequent change) (50%), reliable and trustworthy (48%), and considering safety to be the most important value (46%). The respondents also indicated that the Police is a conservative institution (46%) that does not have large financial resources (45%) and lives in the past (38%). No explicitness of attributes was detected in such features as: efficiently/inefficiently functioning (43 vs 40%), having/not having public support (41 vs 40%), open/hermetic (35 vs 33%). Taking into account the obtained

results of the research, it can be concluded that the organizational culture of the Police shows the same characteristics as the bureaucratic, elitist, strong and hierarchical culture.

7. Conclusions

The Police in Poland as an employer constantly undertake activities aimed at attracting new officers to their ranks.

The research shows that despite the mostly negative image of the Police as an organization, 16.39% of the respondents declared their willingness to apply for a job in this Police force. The attractiveness of the Police according to the respondents is mainly due to the stability of employment, the possibility of early retirement, a clear career path, continuous improvement of skills, the possibility to help others and the nature of work. The Police are perceived as a bureaucratic organization, dedicated largely to men, having the support of the authorities and being a place of work for a select few. The research also indicated that the Police does not have a lot of financial resources and is a conservative organization, which may deter many potential candidates for service, and is due to the typical characteristics of generation Z, which seeks to reject the traditional hierarchy at work and prefers democratic styles of leadership.

Considering the results of the research, the following conclusion can be drawn: The Police as an organization will in the future have to face the necessity of introducing a number of changes in the way it functions in order to improve its image. This will not be an easy task because of the entrenched organizational culture and attachment to tradition, but it is necessary to attract new officers – representatives of the Z generation.

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