

INTERNAL CONDITIONS OF PROFESSIONAL ASPIRATIONS

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Purpose: The aim of this paper is to outline the theoretical approach of internal conditions of professional aspirations. It is to describe the essence of aspirations and its internal conditions.

Design/methodology/approach: The aim of the article was to organize, systematize and describe the knowledge about the role and essence of professional aspirations and its internal determinants. Methods: analysis, synthesis, deduction and induction.

Findings: In the course of the work were found results, which show the important role of aspirations in the area of human resources management.

Social implications: Publication of the article may contribute to increasing social awareness of the essential role of professional aspirations in human resources management in the organization and in the armed forces.

Originality/value: The article organizes and systematizes the knowledge about the professional aspirations and its internal determinants. It is addressed to managers, human resources workers as well as academic lecturers and soldiers.

Keywords: Professional Aspirations, Human Resources Management, Determinants of Aspirations, Psychology of Motivation, Ambitions.

1. Introduction

Constant changes in the world, which are determined by the dynamics of the market and economy, bring a constant need for newer and more effective solutions in the field of broadly understood management. The growing role of human potential, managed with greater care, makes a person together with a team of competences, as well as their aspirations as a strategic resource of the organization. The higher level in the organization, the more important it is. A person with the required competences for a given position determine the human resources management of subordinates with different potential, both in terms of competences and the level of professional aspirations. Described situation is also reflected in the Armed Forces of the Republic of Poland, because human capital is an equally valuable resource in all these organizations. Managing soldiers' careers by senior superiors and commanders seems to be

more and more important nowadays. According to the 1 subordinates' leadership predispositions, competences and aspirations superiors should support them in the further development of this career. This is an important element of the functioning of an organization, especially a hierarchical one, in order to retain soldiers in professional service, with a parallel, competitive private sector offering attractive employment conditions. To a large extent, retaining soldiers in the professional service thanks to the functioning of an effective career management system in line with the aspirations of soldiers, may lead to higher efficiency of the organization, which is based on experience and stimulates continuous professional development of its employees. The position of Szczepański is also known, saying that individual aspirations are one of the key factors determining the development of society and its proper functioning, as well as the driving force of the economy, which is rationally used and shaped as the foundation for the development of the population (Syrek, 1986, p. 12).

2. The Essence of Aspirations

Aspirations is an interdisciplinary concept. Therefore, many researchers representing different scientific fields have attempted to define them in various ways and understandings. When analyzing the content of the literature on the subject, one can most often encounter the concept of aspirations in the field of psychological, sociological or pedagogical research. They are also an inseparable component of management sciences because of their correlation with the set closer or more distant goals and life desires, regardless of whether the goals are related to career, science, art or starting a family. The aspirations in a large extent, determine whether a person undertakes given actions or directions and determine their intensity. They influence short and long-term plans and activate the unit to act in. Broadly speaking, aspirations can be identified with desires, intentions or wishes that relating to the effects of undertaken or planned activities. For the purposes of the publication, the author adopted the definition of aspirations according to Kamiński: **aspirations move one step ahead of the needs, related to the motivations for the tasks that a person sets herself.**

3. Determinants of Aspirations

This part will present the determinants of professional aspirations in classification presented by different authors. It is worth to note that in the case of classification a given factor can be classified only into one class. That arranging and synthesizing the image of various conditions is a quite hard task. This is due to the fact that we still have incomplete knowledge in this field.

To be specific the different levels of generality and scopes of statements relating to these issues, different strategies of learning about human aspirations, and determinants shaping these aspirations, as well as the diversity of sources and formulated hypotheses.

As mentioned earlier, aspirations can be shaped by various factors. Often these conditions are not realized, and sometimes even unknown by people. The factors may also appear in some relationship with each other, so their interdependence further complicates attempts at synthetic classification.

Despite difficulties described above, researchers are still interested in the subject of aspirations. It is an interdisciplinary complex issue, and at the same time requiring multi-faceted research spread over time due to the continuous process of shaping aspirations. The literature of the subject adopted a consistent range of factors that determine aspirations. However, the discrepancy in the classification of the research subject results from the multidimensionality of the issue and the differences in relation to the level of aspiration and their content.

As a result of establishing the aspirations' determinants, it will be possible to shape, strengthen, develop, or extinguish them. This has a major impact on the individual's subsequent choice of occupation or the preferred type of career. The most important determinants of aspirations include personality, environmental and pedagogical ones. As it is emphasized by Sikorski, the division of the aspirations' determinants is a synthetic creation, because aspirations are conditioned by a diverse set of factors, and their importance changes during the person life. The division is presented on Figure 1 below.

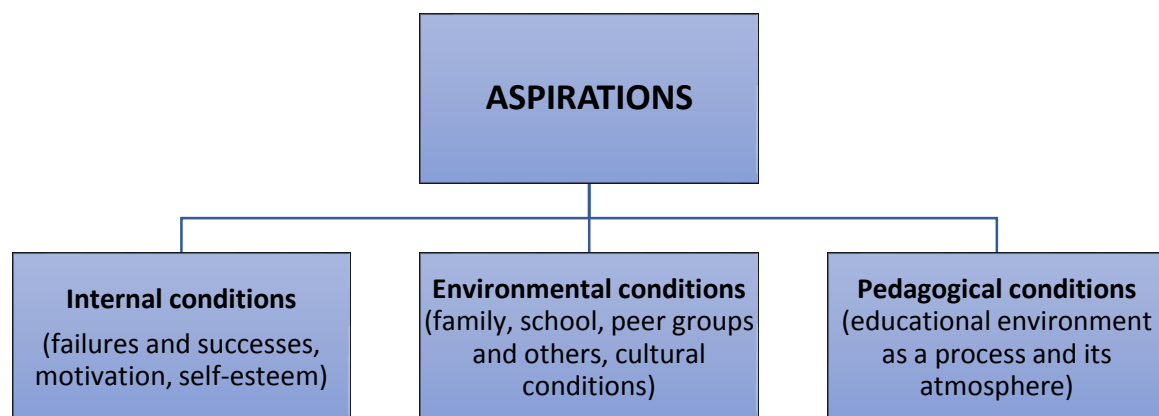


Figure 1. Division of determinants of aspirations according to Sikorski. Adapted from: „Aspiracje dzieci i młodzieży” by T. Lewowicki. Warsaw 1970 by PWN, 1970, pp. 28-39.

4. Internal (Personal) Conditions of Aspirations

People have different needs. These are mentioned as one of the many factors that determines aspirations. In sociology and psychology of motivation is written that the biological needs starting with the spiritual ones. Willingness to satisfy different types of aspirations is related to motivation. The willingness to satisfy their needs also stems from their exploratory and creative attitude towards the world (Janowski, 1977, p. 15).

A need for achievement is considered as a special kind of need. They are considered relatively constant properties that manifest themselves in different life situations. There are possible differences in the needs of achievements in relation to the field of activity, which affects the image of directional aspirations (types of aspirations). Regarding career aspirations, an elementary factor is the need for achievement, which is relatively permanent and typical of most personality types (Dyrda, 2009, p. 185). We will have to deal with professional aspirations in particular when the needs for achievements occur in the professional and educational sphere (due to the previously mentioned positive correlation) and the presence of such needs as: social recognition, security, self-fulfillment, affiliation and group membership. These factors determine the emergence of aspirations and their level (Skorny, 1980, p. 113).

According to Sikorski, among the personality determinants (otherwise psychological or subjective) of aspirations and their level it is distinguished: motivation, successes and failures, as well as self-esteem. In the 1930s and 1940s, studies were conducted which proved that there is a correlation between the level of aspiration and the successes and failures of the past. Successes increase, and failures decrease the level of aspiration. Based on the above, the individual assesses herself in terms of personality traits, predispositions and competences, which are psychological factors determining the occurrence of aspirations. A person's self-esteem is the result of ones life experiences, behavior, own and other people's opinions, as well as intelligence, physical conditions and, above all, personality traits (general and directional abilities, temperament and emotions) (Sikorski, 2005, pp. 11, 13).

The motivation process is an important element in creating aspirations. It directs human activities so that the intended goal is achieved. It is a process of mental regulation that energizes and directs human behavior; it can be conscious or unconscious (<https://encyklopedia.pwn.pl...>). This process depends on the usefulness of the target for the human and its probability – it must be greater than zero. According to Tomaszewski, the human motivation to act is zero when the probability of achieving the goal is zero (Tomaszewski, 1978, p. 182). There is a clear relationship between motivation and aspirations, because of the motive as the basis of the motivation process, which is the goal and a clear course of action where motivation is the source of that action (Dyrda, 2009, p. 182).

Delving into the theory of motivation (Feather, 1966, p. 13), we read that the level of aspiration depends on the following two motivational processes:

1. achievement motivation – the individual shows a tendency to take actions which, in her or his opinion, predict success,
2. avoidance motivation – no action is taken that is judged to be a condition for failure.

Achievement motivation undoubtedly influences the realistic assessment of human performance. Success determines the increase in the level of aspiration. It is associated with positive reinforcement, while failure similarly reduces the level of aspiration. People with strong achievement motivation are usually motivated to perform tasks of medium difficulty (probability of success 0.5 on a 0-1 scale). Success in this group of people determines the increase in the level of aspiration, failure similarly lowers this level. People who are weakly motivated undertake easy or very difficult tasks, where when the latter failure, it is easy to justify the cause of the failure. The above relationships have been demonstrated in numerous psychological studies. The above dependencies are explained in the so-called the first Yerkes-Dodson law, which says that the optimal level of motivation when performing tasks is motivation with a strength of about 0.5 (on a scale of 0-1) (Bednarczyk-Jama, 2008, p. 89), i.e. medium or slightly higher motivation (Buchodorska, 1972). These people are characterized by a low level of fear of failure, they are self-confident and persistent in achieving their goals, do not take risky actions and perceive their chances of success realistically. With regard to the high motivation of achievements, the aspirations of people who realistically assess their own abilities seem understandable, and undertaking medium-difficult tasks by them gives the chance of success and satisfaction with performing a task with an above-average degree of difficulty. Referring to the motivation of achievements, it can be assumed that people with high achievement motivation will show high professional aspirations, because, due to ambition, they will strive for the convergence of their profession and its level in the organizational hierarchy with their competences and professional qualifications (Skorny, 1980, p. 120).

Successes and failures are also important factors determining aspirations, especially their level. The increase in the level of aspiration in each behavior category after successful completion of a task is often used in teaching (Lewin, 1944). Professional aspirations will also be a balance of successes and failures during professional service, and they will shape the level of professional aspirations of soldiers.

A high or low level of (professional) task performance should always be assessed against an established frame of reference which, depending on the circumstances, may be (Skorny, 1980, pp. 70-75):

- a socially sanctioned norm that defines the expected results of an action (military norms),
- the performance previously achieved by the person,
- results achieved by other people (soldiers),
- subjective feelings of success and failure,

- significance of the goal in the hierarchy of human values (the higher the significance, the stronger the sense of success),
- the attractiveness and difficulty level of the task.

It should be noted that all relationships between the sense of success and the level of aspiration are very individual. They occur when carrying out tasks with an average level of difficulty, which is a specific reason for experiencing a given type of feeling success or failure (Hoppe, 1930).

Self-esteem is also a factor mentioned among the determinants of aspirations according to Sikorski. It favors a high level of aspiration while its index is also high and vice versa. This regularity applies to both different types of self-esteem and aspirations (Lewowicki, 1970, pp. 30-31). Self-image created by other people as a result of one's experiences and opinions, judgments, information about a given person plays an important role in the process of shaping self-esteem and aspirations (Łukaszewski, 1974). Self-esteem consists of evaluating judgments concerning oneself, one's physical and mental characteristics and relations with the environment (Mądrzycki, 1996, p. 179). As is commonly known, these judgments can be both positive and negative. It is self-esteem that influences our assessment of predispositions to perform a given profession or valuing our skills. According to Dyrda, the sources of self-esteem should be included as follows (Dyrda, 2009, p. 195):

- own achievements-implementation of tasks,
- achievements of people with similar abilities,
- opinions of people important to us,
- external signals of emotional arousal,
- previous negative experiences in achieving the goals.

Numerous studies have confirmed that people may differently perceive aspects of their personality. However, they tend to evaluate positively by focusing on dimensions that are important to them or considering as important those dimensions where their person fares better than other people (Kozielecki, 1981, pp. 156-180). The general tendency is the presence of positive self-esteem in almost all people. An exception from people with depression (Pyszczyński, 1987). People protect their positive self-esteem and try to strengthen or raise it. For this purpose, they use various types of defense mechanisms (Grzegółowska-Klarkowska, 1988), one of the less typical is the tendency to internal attribution of successes and external attribution of causes of failure (Mądrzycki, 1996, p. 179). A high level of intelligence is a factor conducive to a realistic attitude towards achieving life goals and self-esteem (and aspirations) adequate to intellectual abilities. On the other hand, neuroticism and strong timidity lower self-esteem and affect aspirations by underestimating one's own abilities (Lewowicki, 1970, p. 32).

Apart from the division of determinants of aspirations according to Sikorski, the systematics of Dyrda deserves attention. It is presented in Table 1 below, which the author adopted for the publication. It is a supplement and extension of the previously described classification according to Sikorski.

Table 1.

Typology of determinants of aspirations according to Dyrda

Aspirations	
Personal Determinants	Social Determinants
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – needs, – motivation, – successes and failures, – self-esteem, – personal conditions, – life plans, – interests and hobbies, – abilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – the environment of organized educational activity (school, collage), – environment of natural educational activity (family, peer environment, orphanage, foster family), – further surroundings (local environment, national environment, religious, cultural environment).

Own study based on: Dyrda, M. (2009). *Pedagogika społeczna. O aspiracjach, jakości i sensie życia*. Warsaw: Wydawnictwo Oficyna Wydawnicza ASPRA-JR. p. 155.

It can be noticed that in the above systematics presented in Table 1 was extended by Dyrda with: personal conditions, life plan, interests and hobbies and abilities. In social conditions Dyrda distinguishes: the environment of organized educational activity, the environment of natural educational activity and other surroundings.

Personal conditions are another determinant influencing the development of professional aspirations. Within these conditions, we distinguish (Dyrda, 2009, pp. 179-180):

- physical conditions (health, body anthropometry, appearance, and beauty),
- mental dispositions (personality, value system, moral principles as well as temperament and way of thinking),
- social dispositions (individual properties of a given individual that determine the way of relating to other people) (Pieter, 1963, p. 216).

All the above personal conditions will have an impact on professional aspirations, in particular social dispositions, which determine the quality of interpersonal relations (Kuzior, 2017, pp. 235-236). These factors translate into teamwork, as well as psychological predispositions, such as: personality traits, attitudes, views, perceptions, as well as norms and values on the basis of which a soldier builds her or his relations with other soldiers and functions in the service environment.

It can be assumed that due to different male and female social roles (in different societies and cultures often based on stereotypes) (Szewczuk, 1998, pp. 860-864), aspirations may differ according to gender. Currently, the share of women in the labor market is equal to that of men, but their percentage in politics and in positions related to state security and defense is still very low. However, it is slowly and systematically growing. Currently, the quantitative share of female soldiers in the Armed Forces has exceeded 8,833.

Life plans in relation to professional aspirations define the closer and further goals of the activity as well as the outline of their implementation. Szewczuk was the first to introduce into Polish literature, who defines a life plan *as a system of goals to which an individual aims in his actions and general principles of their implementation* (Szewczuk, 1966, p. 391). According to the quoted definition, the life plan is built on the individual's view of the world and her or his emotional relationship to reality. Some authors argue that an individual may have many plans or life tasks. Regarding a task, it can be imposed on an individual, for example by a superior, while a life plan refers to a well-thought-out and intentional nature of the prepared or implemented activity (Mądrzycki, 1996, p. 111).

There is consensus scientific opinion that:

- the entity's life plan or tasks relate to matters of great importance to the entity,
- are implemented over a longer period,
- cover a significant part of the daily activities of the individual,
- they also reflect the individual's needs, values, and world view.

The possibilities of its implementation play an important role in creating a life plan, as noted by Dyrda. Undoubtedly, the professional plans of female soldiers, apart from education, skills improvement, and qualifications, would also include maternity ones. This is the more important as the period of maternity opportunities is limited at the time of the chance for a decisive promotion in the career ladder, statistically women decide to become a mother (Hewlett, 2016, p. 10), and colleagues who stay in the workplace receive a promotion. The components of the life plan for soldiers will be a military rank and a possible position (military specialization), as well as courses and training that will bring you closer to meeting your professional aspirations in service (e.g. a language course, a driving license course).

The next personality factor influencing the aspirations of soldiers are their **interests, abilities and hobbies**. They are an important component of internal motivation that favors the implementation of long-term plans, e.g. life plan. It is the interests that make the individual shape a positive emotional and cognitive attitude towards one and her or his social environment, which has a beneficial effect on a person's life plans and their aspirations for the future (Dyrda, 2009, p. 189). When an individual is interested in a certain object, he enjoys getting to know that object, which in turn favors the self-reinforcement of the subject's cognitive activity (Mądrzycki, 1996, p. 92). If the main interest of a person is his profession and the related implementation of professional aspirations, it will bring both pleasure and satisfaction to this individual, and will positively affect the implementation of his career. Therefore, such a person may not even be aware of the obvious connection of her or his actions aimed at developing ones abilities and self-education with the benefits that this brings to professional development and the fulfillment of aspirations. Abilities will also affect aspirations, as their condition the professional performance of tasks in everyday military service. Passions, unlike the interests of an individual, should be understood as a hobby (Dyrda, 2009, pp. 188-189).

Majewski rightly noticed that, apart from personality determinants of aspirations, **professional orientation** is of great importance. The classification proposed by him specifies the general determinants of aspirations, where a group of factors determining professional aspirations in the organization's environment has been particularly distinguished. These factors determine the level and type of professional aspirations of officers in the category of external and internal factors, as shown in Figure 2 below.

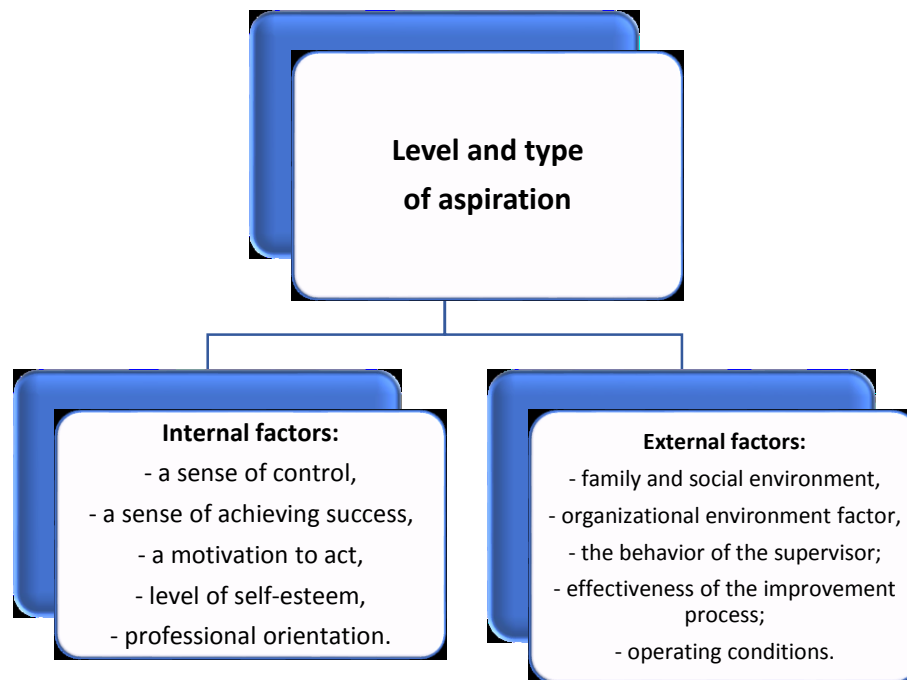


Figure 2. Factors determining the level and type of professional aspirations of officers. Own study based on Majewski, T. (2010). *Aspiracje dowódcze oficerów na studiach Akademii Obrony Narodowej*. Warsaw: AON, p. 22.

According to Edgar Schein's classification of professional orientations, *professional orientations are understood as permanent properties resulting from personality diversity and determining the choices of individual people. There are the following types of focus: management, technical, security, creative, autonomy and independence* (Majewski, 2016, p. 8). The above-mentioned directions are therefore the basis for the pursuit of careers of soldiers in the Armed Forces and they will be understood as a favorable personality type in the performance of a specific profession. Below, the author will describe individual types oriented according to the so-called Schein's anchors (Flamholtz, 2018).

Management-oriented. A professional goal is to gain new experience in management, develop the skills and abilities of personnel management, leadership and decision making. It will also be associated with increasing the scope of power and striving for financial success. It is an individual that feels good in the role of a leader, boss, supervisor or organizer and will be fulfilled in a managerial or leadership career (Kuzior, 2021, p. 101). A management-oriented person will:

- have interpersonal competences – the ability to lead, supervise, shape people's attitudes, and direct their activities towards the achievement of the organization's goals,
- have analytical skills, allowing for solving complex problems in conditions of uncertainty and having an incomplete range of information,
- show emotional balance that will not allow for disorganization of activities due to conflicts and interpersonal tensions occurring in the place of service, causing exhaustion.

Technical (functional) orientation. It is an interest in the technical side of the duties performed, without considering its managerial aspects. A person characterized by this type of orientation, at the time of promotion, will still focus the most on the professionalism of performing tasks and striving for mastery in her or his narrowly defined field of activity, and not on the managerial or organizational aspect of work.

Safety-oriented. This type of orientation determines the employee to strengthen their own position in the organization by being guided by the need for security and stability. He is emotionally attached to the organization, often for life. In return for the need for security, he loses the chance to face the challenges of a new job, the opportunity to test his skills in another organization or gain new experience. As a rule, he does not reach high management (command) levels because it involves taking risks that are unbearable by this type of employee.

Creative orientation. Employees with a creative focus show a strong need to invent or create something new. It is their basic motive of professional work. Such people are willing to acquire new knowledge about themselves and about the organization, they notice problems and show willingness to solve them, they are willing to introduce changes and innovations. Most often, they are mobile employees, with a positive attitude to raising qualifications and promotion in a horizontal structure. Most of them are satisfied with the advisory positions.

Focus on autonomy and independence. Employed people focused on autonomy and independence strive to expand the scope of their freedom. They do not like restrictions related to bureaucracy and autocratism of their superiors and direct their actions towards freeing themselves from such barriers. Despite the fact that these people are strongly oriented towards independence, they are characterized by a lack of seeking management positions.

In the Schein's statements we also read that people focused on independence and focused on creative activities feel the need for autonomy and the feeling that their achievements are the result of their own actions, dependent on their personal competences and work. The difference between them results, however, from the fact that the former strives primarily for freedom and the ability to rely only on themselves, while those focused on creativity show taking over and involvement in the undertaking or action being carried out (Schein, 2013).

5. Conclusions

The dynamics of the market and the constantly changing environmental conditions mean that today's organizations must be very flexible and ready for all kinds of turmoil and the changes that come with it. This applies to both the private sector and the Polish Armed Forces. Poland's geopolitical environment and its membership in NATO mobilize the military to constantly modernize and purchase modern equipment, as well as to constantly educate and improve the qualifications of soldiers. They are the strategic capital of the organization that is the army. Therefore, the more important element of management in the organization will be considering the professional aspirations of soldiers in the process of career management, so that they can satisfy them without leaving the service to the private sector. This will allow you to keep experienced and ambitious people in the service, who will be able to professionally perform their duties, fulfilling themselves in the service and at the same time implementing the training program.

Aspirations are synonymous with ambition and desires to be met by an individual in the near or distant future. They are very important as they condition the taking of an action or its omission. Aspirations are part of the personality of an individual, they are a relatively permanent creation. As the self-awareness of the individual increases and the factors influencing it, aspirations may strengthen, diminish, their level may increase or decrease, and their type may change due to the content.

Various types of aspirations are described in the typology of aspirations, and their content was adopted as a criterion. Thus, educational, professional, social, managerial, family and material aspirations and hobbies were distinguished. The typology of determinants of aspirations was adopted after Dyrda. The factors influencing the aspirations are divided into two main groups. The first are internal (personal) determinants and the second are external (social) determinants. As part of the internal determinants of aspirations related to the motivation of achievements, successes and failures, the following elements were distinguished and characterized: self-esteem, personality conditions, life plans, interests, abilities, and hobbies. This piece of paper was focused on personal conditions, however, in terms of external factors influencing professional aspirations, the following factors should be mentioned: school, peer group, organizational environment, and mass media. The career orientation was also characterized according to Schein, where the focus on management, safety, technical, creative, as well as autonomy and independence was distinguished.

All the above-mentioned factors, both internal and external, influencing the aspirations of soldiers will be important in relation to their career aspirations, some will have a greater impact, others less. They will also be able to influence their content. These determinants also remain in some correlation with each other, so it seems advisable to conduct a multifaceted study of factors that influence the career aspirations of female soldiers.

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