



A job that's interesting, but requires supervisor support. Personal determinants, perceived job characteristics and interest in prison service work. A comparative study between Poland and Hungary

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Summary.

Purpose: The aim of this research was to analyze the factors that significantly shape interest in work or professional internships in prison services (*PS*).

Methodology: The study was conducted on a sample of students in social sciences from Poland ($N=275$) and Hungary ($N=252$) using The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire, Brief Resilience Coping Scale, Empathy Quotient – short, Portrait Values Questionnaire, Short Version of the Impulsive Behavior Scale, and single-item measures of job control and job support.

Findings: *PS* internship interest in the Polish and Hungarian subsamples was higher than the number of internships conducted during university studies by 10-fold. In the Hungarian sample, family traditions were predictors of *PS* work interest. Perceived supervisor support was significant for *PS* work interest; females were more likely to express *PS* internship interest.

Research implications: Analyses regarding the interest in *PS* among potential candidates should be continued and developed based on the data collected so far.

Keywords: prison officer; prison service; support from supervisors; impulsivity; empathy

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**Praca, która jest interesująca, ale wymaga wsparcia przełożonego.
Czynniki osobiste, postrzegane cechy pracy i zainteresowanie pracą
w służbie więziennej.**

Studium porównawcze pomiędzy Polską a Węgrami

Streszczenie.

Cel: Celem badania była analiza czynników, które w istotny sposób kształtują zainteresowanie pracą lub praktykami zawodowymi w Służbie Więziennej (SW).
Metodologia: Badanie przeprowadzono na próbie studentów nauk społecznych z Polski ($N=275$) i Węgier ($N=252$) przy użyciu Kopenhaskiego Kwestionariusza Psychospołecznego, skali Brief Resilience Coping Scale, Skróconej Skali Ilorazu Empatii, Portretowego Kwestionariusza Wartości, Skali Impulsywnego Zachowania UPPS-P oraz jednoitemowych skali do pomiaru kontroli pracy i wsparcia w pracy.

Wyniki: Zainteresowanie praktykami w SW w podgrupie polskiej i węgierskiej było 10-krotnie wyższe niż ich liczba faktycznie odbytych w trakcie studiów. W próbie węgierskiej tradycje rodzinne były predyktorami zainteresowania pracą w SW. Postrzegane wsparcie przełożonych było istotne dla zainteresowania pracą w SW; kobiety częściej wyrażały zainteresowanie praktykami w SW.

Implikacje badawcze: Analizy dotyczące zainteresowania SW przez potencjalnych kandydatów powinny być kontynuowane i rozwijane w oparciu o dotychczas zgromadzone dane.

Słowa kluczowe: funkcjonariusz więzienny; Służba Więzienna; wsparcie ze strony przełożonych; impulsywność; empatia

Background

The role of a prison officer (*PO*) allows the state to realize its basic tasks related to public safety and order. Within penitentiary institutions, *POs* are responsible for the resocialization, education, and management of inmates (Obidoa et al., 2011). In their interactions with inmates, *POs* are obligated to follow the principles of humanitarianism and respect their rights and dignity. Prisons are a particularly dangerous work environment, and the *POs'* work can be unpredictable and risky (Misis et al., 2013; Keinan and Malach-Pines, 2007). The literature highlights that *POs* should have a calm and balanced demeanor that will not lead to conflict, which will simultaneously facilitate the appropriate implementation of regulations (Poklek, 2006).

Researchers have studied the harmful effects of work on this professional group (Moon and Maxwell, 2004). Their results established a link between the characteristics of prison service (*PS*) work and the stress experienced by *POs* (Lambert and Hogan, 2009). *POs* report poorer mental health than other professions; they are at risk of occupational burnout (Finney et al., 2013). Studies have confirmed the hypothesis that social support from both peers and supervisors plays an important role in managing potential sources of stress in *PS* work (Lambert et al., 2010).

The issue of employment quality in the *PS* reflects on the quality of realization of the basic aims of its penal policy (Vereycken and Ramioul, 2020). There are

numerous models of realizing this policy across Europe. By 2022, there were over 190 inmates per 100,000 citizens in Poland and Hungary (EuroPris, 2023). These were the highest proportions in the European Union. In 2019, repeat offenders comprised 42% of the inmate population in Hungary (Rutkai and Lívía, 2019). In the same year in Poland, the proportion of convicted repeat offenders compared to the total inmate population was 37.171 to 65.610 (i.e., 56.65%) (Kędzierski, 2022). Hungarian penitentiary institutions are facing issues of overcrowding, difficult housing conditions, and unsatisfactory healthcare conditions (Horvath, 2017). The *PS* in Poland manages over 73,000 inmates in penitentiary institutions and detention centers (Prison Service, 2021). It employs more than 30,000 officers and civil workers. In Hungary, *POs* manage over 18,000 inmates across 32 penitentiary institutions that employ over 8,000 people (Hungarian Prison Service, 2024). Nevertheless, both Polish and Hungarian *PSs* face difficult staffing issues and recruitment efforts to alleviate staff shortages.

Despite their practical utility, studies on the perceptions of professional roles are rare. The social perception of *POs* is frequently very negative (Eriksson, 2023). A telephone survey of 1010 respondents in Illinois showed that (Sundt, 2009):

1. almost 2/3 of respondents indicated that they were very unlikely to consider working as a *PO*,
2. respondents strongly agreed with the statement that the job of a *PO* requires significant responsibility, is useful for society, and gives an opportunity to help others,
3. danger and risk were named as the least desirable characteristics of the job of a *PO*.

Prison service work can be perceived in various ways, depending on individual expectations as well as the unique characteristics of every individual (Baruk, 2016). When designing the model in the current study, the following findings from the literature were taken into account:

1. Every organization and individual have their own demands and resources (Terelak and Janowska, 2009). Fit between the individual and organizational characteristics is important for professional functioning, including health and satisfaction. Individual characteristics include values, goals, personality traits, and attitudes.
2. Prison service employees are at risk for worsened health due to professional demands (Goodwin et al., 2013). Thus, it is indicated that they should exhibit resilience and empathy in order to be able to carry out their work properly (Czekaj, 2015). *Pos* themselves report that they are perceived as lacking competence and having a low propensity towards violence (Crawley and Crawley, 2008; Merecz-Kot and Cębrzyńska, 2008).
3. Within penitentiary institutions, there is no division into “male” and “female” positions but *POs* are more frequently men. For example, women make up 26.9% of the Polish *PS*. Polish and Hungarian legal regulations do not limit work in penitentiary institutions specifically to men or women.

4. In some countries, working as a *PO* is a family tradition (Piotrowski, Sygit-Kowalkowska, and Hamzah, 2020). The profession is performed by subsequent generations in the family.

Aim of the study

This study aims to determine the role of individual characteristics, perceived job characteristics, family tradition of working in uniform services in facilitating interest in working as a *PO* (*PS* work interest) or doing an internship in a penitentiary institution (internship interest) among Polish and Hungarian students. To date, psychological studies on students' perceptions of a *PO* job have not been conducted. Based on an analysis of the literature on job demands, we assumed that the following characteristics would determine interest in working as a *PO* or internship interests:

- Individual characteristics: Resilience, empathy, impulsivity, preferred values, and gender.
- Perceived job characteristics: Emotional demands, perceived job support from colleagues and supervisors, and job control.
- Family tradition of working in uniform services.

This study involved students in social sciences; comprising individuals who are potentially interested in work or an internship in the *PS* and thus are able to answer self-reported questions on this topic. We hypothesized that:

H1: Participants' individual characteristics are predictors of *PS* work or internship interest.

H2: Perceived job characteristics are predictors of *PS* work or internship interest.

H3: Family tradition of working in uniform services is a predictor of *PS* work or internship interest.

H4: Family tradition of working in uniform services moderates the relationship between individual characteristics and *PS* work or internship interest.

H5: Family tradition of working in uniform services moderates the relationship between perceived job characteristics and *PS* work or internship interest.

Methodology

Participants and procedures

This study was conducted online at two universities in Poland and one in Hungary. Information about the study was distributed through student websites. Participation was voluntary and anonymous. Prior to participation, each participant provided informed consent and was acquainted with the aims and conditions of the study in accordance with the American Psychological Association's Ethical Principles of Psychologists and Code of Conduct.

Translation and re-translation from the original language (Polish) into Hungarian were performed by three translators. Competent expert raters created the final translated version. After analyzing the individual questionnaire items, those for which the raters were in full agreement were chosen.

Measures

The following measures were used in the study:

- a) Single-item measures of perceived job control and job support from supervisors and colleagues (Fisher et al., 2016). The item content was adapted to a PS context (e.g., *The Prison Officer has significant control over how they perform their job; The Prison Officer can count on support from their supervisors whenever they need it*).
- b) The Copenhagen Psychosocial Questionnaire (COPSOQ-II), developed by Pejtersen et al. (2010), comprises 41 scales and 127 items. In this study, four items were used to assess job emotional demands using the phrase “work of a Prison Officer” (e.g., *The work of a Prison Officer places them in emotionally difficult situations; The Prison Officer must consider other people’s personal problems*). A validation of the Polish version of the COPSOQ-II showed Cronbach’s α internal consistency indices of .73 and .78 for the emotional demands subscale in the first and second measurement, respectively (Baka, 2019).
- c) The Brief Resilience Coping Scale (BRS), developed by Smith et al. (2008), is a self-reported measure of an individual’s ability to quickly recover after stressful or negative life events. The scale consisted of six items (e.g., *I tend to bounce back quickly after hard times*). The mean score was used as an index of resilience. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The internal compatibility consistency of the Polish version of the BRS, assessment based on measured by Cronbach’s alpha and McDonald’s omega was good (.88) (Konaszewski, Niesiołędzka, et al. 2020).
- d) Empathy Quotient – short (EQ-Short), developed by Wakabayashi et al., is a shortened version of the full scale measuring cognitive and affective empathy (Wakabayashi et al., 2006). The EQ-Short questionnaire included items assessing the ability to recognize other people’s thoughts or feelings and respond appropriately. Respondents rated their degree of agreement with each item by selecting one of the four response choices. Tests of validity and reliability of the translated Polish version showed that the tool has good psychometric properties (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .78$), comparable to the original version (Jankowiak-Siuda et al., 2017).
- e) The Portrait Values Questionnaire (PVQ), developed by Schwartz (2012), consists of a main question for the respondent *How much is the described person like you?* This study used values from extreme positions in the hierarchy, that is, those most and least preferred from a PS perspective. Thus, two subscales were

chosen: security (love of order and rules); and self-direction (independence in thinking and behavior, creativity, freedom, and autonomous goal setting).

In the Polish adaptation, the PVQ showed Cronbach's α coefficients of .66 for the security subscale and .60 for the self-direction subscale (Cieciuch and Zaleski, 2011).

f) The short version of the Urgency-Premeditation-Perseverance-Sensation Seeking-Positive Urgency (UPPS-P) impulsive behavior scale consisted of 20 items, designed based on Whiteside and Lynam's full-length UPPS-P (Whiteside and Lynam, 2001). According to the underlying theory and results of other studies, the UPPS-P measures five relatively independent but correlated personality aspects of impulsivity (subscales). In Polish analyses, the SUPPS-P was shown to have high reliability, as measured by internal consistency (all Cronbach's α =.80; Poprawa, 2019).

Cronbach's α coefficients between the Polish (*P*) and Hungarian (*W*) subsamples were as follows: *P* = .675; *W* = .773 for security, *P* = .623; *W* = .688 for self-direction, *P* = .847; *W* = .843 for lack of premeditation, *P* = .864; *W* = .889 for lack of perseverance, *P* = .795; *W* = .767 for sensation seeking, *P* = .835; *W* = .834 for negative urgency, *P* = .887; *W* = .866 for positive urgency, *P* = .853, *W* = .889 for empathy, *P* = .875; *W* = .852 for resilience, and *P* = .552; *W* = .735 for emotional demands.

The study materials also included questions about *PS* work or internship interest (Yes/No), having completed an internship in a penitentiary facility prior to participation in the study (Yes/No), family traditions of other family members having worked in uniform services (Yes/No), sex (Female/Male), and the study program.

Results

Descriptive analysis

Table 1 presents a description of the sample.

Table 1 Characteristics of the study sample

	<i>Poland N = 275</i>	<i>Hungary N = 252</i>
Sex	Female 79% Male 21.0%	Female 85% Male 15%
Study programs (minimum 5% of the sample)	Psychology 25.4%, Criminology 34.1%, Law 25.7%, Internal security 5.8%, Correctional rehabilitation 5.1%	Pedagogy 43.2% Social work 32.9% Law 11% Psychology 10.3%

cont. tab. 1

	<i>Poland N = 275</i>	<i>Hungary N = 252</i>
Interest in prison service work	Yes (38.4%)	Yes (21.34%)
	No (61.6%)	No (78.66%)
Family tradition of uniform services work	Yes (54%)	Yes (37.7%)
	No (46%)	No (62.3%)
Prison service internship experience	Yes (7.6%)	Yes (5.5%)
	No (92.4%)	No (94.5%)
Interest in prison service internship	Yes (71.7%)	Yes (66.7%)
	No (28.3%)	No (33.3%)

Individual traits as predictors in interest in work and internship in PS (H1)

Overall sample model. Interest in work

The analysis showed that based on the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, the model had good fit to data, ($\chi^2(8) = 5.27; p = .729$). The model explained approximately 3% of the variance in the explained variable ($R^2_{\text{Cox-Snell}} = .029$). The only statistically significant predictor of PS work interest was sensation seeking (see Table 2). For each unit of sensation seeking, the odds of expressing interest in PS work decreased by 26% (odds ratio [OR] = .741).

Table 2 Logistic regression coefficients for the model explaining interest in work in the prison service – Overall sample model

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI for OR</i>	
						<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Sex	.40	.27	2.21	.137	1.50	.88	2.55
Empathy	-.15	.32	.22	.636	.86	.46	1.60
Resilience	.33	.32	1.06	.303	1.39	.74	2.59
Safety	-.16	.12	1.75	.186	.86	.68	1.08
Self-direction	.18	.13	1.96	.162	1.20	.93	1.54
Lack of premeditation	-.15	.21	.51	.475	.86	.58	1.29
Lack of perseverance	-.06	.19	.10	.757	.94	.65	1.37
Sensation seeking	-.30	.15	3.89	.049	.74	.55	1.00
Negative urgency	-.01	.18	.01	.942	.99	.70	1.40
Positive urgency	-.26	.18	2.15	.143	.77	.54	1.09
Constant	-.59	1.41	.17	.677	.56		

Abbreviations. *b*, regression coefficient; *CI*, confidence interval; *LL*, lower limit; *OR*, odds ratio; *p*, *p*-value; *SE*, standard error; *UL*, upper limit; *Z*, Wald statistic.

Polish subsample model. Interest in work

The analysis showed that, based on the Hosmer-Lemeshow test results, the model had good fit to data ($\chi^2(8) = 8.08; p = .426$). The model explained 5% of the variance in the variable ($R^2_{\text{Cox-Snell}} = .050$). Despite a good model fit, neither of the analyzed variables were a statistically significant predictor of *PS* work interest ($p > .05$).

Hungarian subsample work. Interest in work

The analysis showed that, based on the Hosmer-Lemeshow test results, the model had good fit to data ($\chi^2(8) = 4.73; p = .786$). The model explained 7.8% of the variance in the variable ($R^2_{\text{Cox-Snell}} = .078$). Two variables were statistically significant predictors of *PS* work interest: safety ($b = -.53; SE = .21; Z = 6.48; p = .011$; 95% confidence interval [*CI*; .39; .89]) and self-direction ($b = .57; SE = .21; Z = 7.21; p = .007$; 95% *CI* [1.17; 2.67]) as preferred values. As the preference for the value of safety increased by one unit, the probability of expressing interest in *PS* work decreased by 41% ($OR = .591$), whereas as the preference for the value of self-direction increased by one unit, the probability of expressing interest in *PS* work increased by almost twofold ($OR = 1.76$).

Overall sample model. Internship interest

The analysis showed that, based on the Hosmer-Lemeshow test results, the model had good fit to data ($\chi^2(8) = 6.65; p = .575$). The model explained almost 6% of the variance in the variables ($R^2_{\text{Cox-Snell}} = .058$). Similar to interest in *PS* work, sensation seeking was a statistically significant predictor of *PS* internship interest. Sex was also a statistically significant predictor (Table 3). As sensation seeking increased by one unit, the chances of expressing interest in *PS* internships decreased by 43% ($OR = .567$). Females were more likely to express interest in *PS* internships by more than twofold ($OR = 2.04$).

Table 3 *Logistic regression coefficients for the model explaining interest in an internship in the prison service – Overall sample model*

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI</i> for <i>OR</i>	
						<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Sex	.71	.25	8.15	.004	2.04	1.25	3.32

	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>Z</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>OR</i>	95% <i>CI</i> for <i>OR</i>	
						<i>LL</i>	<i>UL</i>
Empathy	.41	.31	1.77	.184	1.51	.82	2.79
Resilience	.33	.34	.94	.332	1.39	.72	2.69
Safety	.00	.12	.00	.995	1.00	.79	1.26
Self-direction	-.07	.13	.27	.602	.94	.73	1.20
Lack of premeditation	.00	.21	.00	.999	1.00	.67	1.50
Lack of perseverance	-.12	.19	.43	.513	.88	.61	1.28
Sensation seeking	-.57	.16	13.14	<.001	.57	.42	.77
Negative urgency	.19	.19	1.10	.294	1.21	.85	1.75
Positive urgency	-.18	.18	.98	.322	.83	.58	1.19
Constant	.61	1.44	.18	.672	1.84		

Abbreviations. *b*, regression coefficient; *CI*, confidence interval; *LL*, lower limit; *OR*, odds ratio; *p*, *p*-value; *SE*, standard error; *UL*, upper limit; *Z*, Wald statistic.

Polish subsample model. Internship interest

The analysis showed that, based on the results of the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, the model had good fit to data ($\chi^2(8) = 3.93$; $p = .864$). The model explained 7.4% of the variance in the variable ($R^2_{\text{Cox-Snell}} = .074$). Lack of premeditation ($b = .93$; $SE = .34$; $Z = 7.76$; $p = .005$; 95% *CI* [1.32; 4.90]) and sex ($b = .73$; $SE = .33$; $Z = 4.85$; $p = .028$; 95% *CI* [1.08; 3.96]) were statistically significant predictors of *PS* internship interest. As the lack of premeditation increased by one unit, the chances of expressing interest in *PS* internships increased slightly, by more than twofold ($OR = 2.07$). Females were more likely to express *PS* internship interest by 2.5-fold ($OR = 2.54$).

Hungarian subsample model. Internship interest

Based on the results of the Hosmer-Lemeshow test, the model had good fit to data ($\chi^2(8) = 4.54$; $p = 0.805$; see Table 6). The model explained 9.9% of the variance in the explained variables ($R^2_{\text{Cox-Snell}} = 0.099$). The only statistically significant predictor of *PS* internship interest was sensation seeking ($b = -.80$; $SE = .23$; $Z = 12.29$; $p < .001$; 95% *CI* [.29; .70]). As sensation seeking increased by one unit, the chance of expressing *PS* internship interest decreased by 55% ($OR = .45$).

Perceived job characteristics as predictors in interest in work and internship in PS (H2)

The analysis showed that in both subsamples, supervisor job support was a statistically significant predictor (Polish: $b = .44$; $SE = .17$; $Z = 6.46$; $p = .011$; 95% CI [1.11; 2.18]; Hungarian: $b = -.52$; $SE = .19$; $Z = 7.62$; $p = .006$; 95% CI [.41; .86]). In the Polish subsample, as the ratings of perceived job support from supervisors increased by one unit, the chances of expressing *PS* work interest increased 1.55 times. The opposite effect was observed in the Hungarian subsample: as the ratings of perceived job support from supervisors increased by one unit, the chances of expressing *PS* work interest decreased by 41% ($OR = .59$).

The model of analysis for *PS* internship interest included four dimensions of perceived job characteristics as predictors. In the Polish subsample ($b = .46$; $SE = .21$; $Z = 4.61$; $p = .032$; 95% CI [1.04; 2.39]) and the overall sample ($b = .30$; $SE = .14$; $Z = 4.20$; $p = .040$; 95% CI [1.01; 1.80]), perceived colleague support was a statistically significant predictor of internship interest. As the ratings of perceived colleague support increased by one unit, the chances of expressing *PS* internship interest increased by 104% ($OR = 1.04$) in the Polish subsample and 101% ($OR = 1.01$) in the overall sample.

Family tradition of working in uniform services as a predictor of interest in work and internship (H3)

The analysis showed that family tradition of working in uniform services was a predictor of *PS* work interest only in the Hungarian subsample ($b = .09$; $SE = .31$; $Z = 8.15$; $p = .004$; 95% CI [1.32; 4.54]). This increased the chances of expressing *PS* work interest by almost 2.5-fold ($OR = 2.45$).

The moderating role of family tradition of working in uniform services in the relationship between individual characteristics and interest in work and internship in PS (H4)

In the Polish subsample, moderation was statistically significant in the relationship between lack of perseverance and *PS* internship interest ($b = -1.12$; $SE = .49$; $t = -2.26$; $p = .024$; 95% CI [-2.09; -.15]), negative urgency, and *PS* internship interest ($b = -.84$; $SE = .42$; $t = -2.00$; $p = .045$; 95% CI [-1.66; -.02]).

A detailed analysis of simple effects for the relationship between lack of perseverance and *PS* internship interest showed a statistically significant relationship between these variables in participants who reported having a family tradition of working in uniform services ($b = -.65$; $SE = .32$; $Z = -2.01$; $p = .045$; 95% CI [-1.28; -.01]), whereas this relationship was not statistically significant among participants without such a family tradition ($b = .47$; $SE = .37$; $Z = 1.25$; $p = .212$; 95% CI [-.27, 1.20]).

The higher the lack of perseverance, the lower the chances of expressing *PS* internship interest among participants with such family traditions. The analysis of simple effects on the relationship between negative urgency and *PS* internship interest revealed a statistically significant relationship between these variables among participants without the above family traditions ($b = .78$; $SE = .33$; $Z = 2.35$; $p = .019$; 95% $CI [.13; 1.44]$).

The moderating role of family tradition of working in uniform services in the relationship between job characteristics and interest in work and internship in the PS (H5)

A statistically significant effect on the relationship between perceived job control and interest in work in the *PS* was observed in the overall sample ($b = .40$; $SE = .21$; $Z = 1.96$; $p = .049$; 95% $CI [<.01; .81]$).

A detailed analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between perceived job control and *PS* work interest in participants who reported having a family tradition of working in uniform services ($b = .30$; $SE = .15$; $Z = 2.02$; $p = .044$; 95% $CI [.01; .59]$) (see Figure 1).

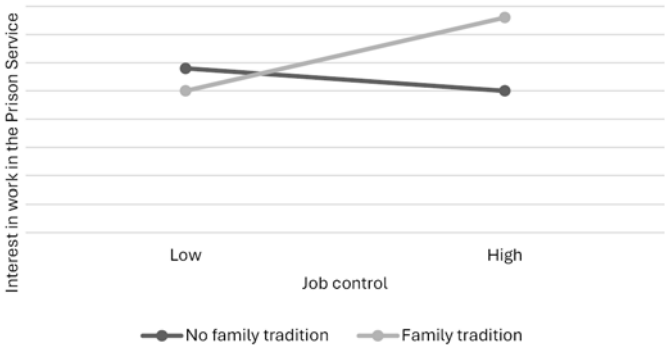


Figure 1 Relationship between perceived job control and interest in work in the prison service among participants with and without a family tradition of working in uniform services – Overall sample

Analogous analyses were conducted to examine the moderating role of family traditions in the relationship between perceived job characteristics and internship interest. A statistically significant effect only occurred in the Polish sample for the relationship between perceived job control and *PS* internship interest ($b = .59$; $SE = .27$; $Z = 2.15$; $p = .031$; 95% $CI [.05; 1.13]$) (Figure 2). The analysis showed a statistically significant relationship between perceived job control and *PS* internship

interest among participants without a family tradition of working in uniform services ($b = -.40$; $SE = .21$; $Z = -1.90$; $p = .057$; 95% $CI [-.82; .01]$).

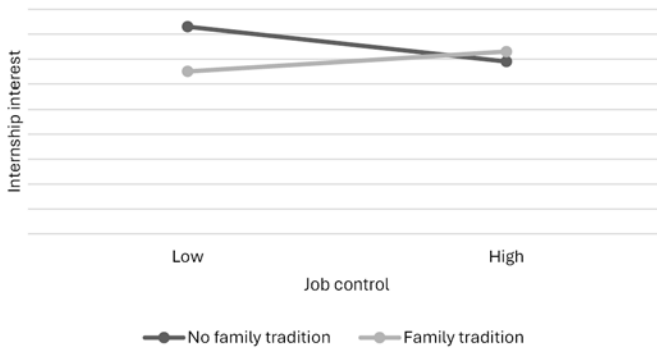


Figure 2 Relationship between job control and prison service internship interest in participants with and without a family tradition of working in the uniformed services – Polish subsample

Discussion

Our study showed that, in both Poland and Hungary, internship interest was higher than the number of actual realized internships by over 10-fold. Thus, it seems valid to conclude that the need for more student internships is a significant factor expressed by participants. The benefits of such internships may include knowledge of the *PO* profession and changes in perceptions of it, which, as studies of the general population have shown, are usually negative.

Impulsivity is one of the variables included in this study. Impulsivity generates a tendency towards reckless behavior, insensitivity to consequences, and an inability to inhibit inappropriate actions (Reynolds et al., 2006). Contrary to impulsivity, a desirable *PO* profile includes discipline, safety maintenance, and appropriate reactions. Therefore, the literature broadly links the considerations of uniform service employees to impulsivity. Of all the impulsivity subscales, sensation seeking played the most significant role in the current study. Higher levels of sensation seeking lowered the chances of expressing *PS* work and internship interests in the overall sample. Sensation seeking is the tendency to engage in and derive pleasure from activities that are exciting and risky, as well as openness to new experiences, regardless of safety. Studies have linked this trait to the risk of drug abuse and other risky behaviors, such as driving while intoxicated (Lydon-Staley et al., 2020). To date, no studies have examined this trait in the context of following laws

in the general population. Rather, it relates only to the theory of crime. Working as a *PO* tends to be dangerous, although sensation-seeking does not seem to correlate with it.

The current study showed that females were more likely to express internship interest by twofold compared to males, both in the overall sample and in the Polish subsample. Females in uniform services is a topic of ongoing empirical and theoretical analysis, frequently in police contexts. The issues of lower physical strength and higher social skills in females are highlighted. One study showed that female police officers had a less positive attitude towards physical force or felt more threatened in situations involving physical force (Biggam et al., 1997). Simultaneously, such traits shape the tendency to diffuse or de-escalate potentially unstable interactions (Garcia, 2003). However, male police officers and men in the general population perceive women as less effective in using force (Salerno and Sanchez, 2020). It should also be noted that female police officers frequently report feeling discouraged by lack of colleague support. They also experience sexual assault and discrimination (Prenzler and Sinclair, 2013). Low job satisfaction in this group leads to high job turnover (Todak et al., 2021).

Studies on interactions between inmates and female *POs* show that they are less formal. Appropriate boundaries in interactions between female uniformed service employees and inmates are difficult to maintain considering the inmates' sensitivity towards issues of power and desire (Crewe, 2006). Simultaneously, according to Liebling et al. (1999), *POs* as a professional group are characterized by striving towards a balance between friendliness and professionalism. Keeping the peace frequently plays a key role in difficult conflict situations.

Our study reveals the role of perceived job support from supervisors and colleagues. Interestingly, supervisor support was a predictor of *PS* work interest in the overall sample. Previous research established that supervisor and directorial support have a negative effect on job stress, and a positive effect on job satisfaction and organizational commitment among employees of various professional groups, as well as in private penitentiaries (Lambert and Hogan, 2009; Ogińska-Bulik et al., 2023). A 2022 analysis concluded that there are gaps in the literature regarding the role of support and *POs'* supervision needs (Forsyth et al., 2022). Some evidence shows that, in a sample of correctional staff, trust in supervisors led to lower occupational burnout (Lambert et al., 2012). Social support affects job satisfaction. According to Rasmussen et al. (2011), greater job support has a beneficial effect on employee well-being, making it a crucial factor. Our results reflect the real problems captured in empirical studies. The literature indicates various types of stress experienced by *POs* as well as weak relations (Schaufeli and Peeters, 2000). The demanding nature of this profession leads to supervisors focusing much more on the inmates than on the *POs*.

In the overall sample, family tradition of working in uniform services was not a statistically significant moderator between individual characteristics or perceived

job characteristics and work and internship interest. In the Hungarian subsample, family tradition of working in uniform services was a statistically significant predictor of work interest. The issue of upholding family traditions is not a subject of scientific analysis, despite numerous empirical examples of such traditions being created by family members in subsequent generations choosing given professions.

The relationship between perceived job control and *PS* work interest was significantly moderated by family traditions in the overall sample. It seems understandable that the perception of higher control will contribute to a deeper understanding of the nature of *PS* work, which is possible in participants with a family history of working in uniform services. This can help to build a sense of agency at work. In contrast, a lack of knowledge imparted by family members and a simultaneous perception of the *PO* role as having higher job control may lead to uncertainty, anxiety, and indecision.

Interestingly, individual characteristics such as empathy and resilience were not statistically significant for shaping *PS* work and internship interest. It seems particularly interesting to consider empathy from the point of view of the *PO* role. *POs* can serve many functions: from guards to medical staff. Both involve the provision of a service and thus, interactions with other people are an inherent part. Empathetic persons can respond to other people's needs and understand them, which facilitates more effective helping.

The model in the current study also involved the variable of personal values. The analyses showed that the variables measured in the current study were only significant in the Hungarian group: as preference for the value of safety increased, chances of expressing *PS* work interest decreased. However, as preference for the value of self-direction increased, chances of expressing *PS* work interest increased almost twofold. This is very interesting from the point of view of recruitment into the *PS*. Individuals with average value preferences (high preference for rules and low need for autonomy in goal-setting) seem to be appropriate candidates for the *PS*. Both in Poland and Hungary, data on personal values is not collected during the *PS* recruitment process.

Limitations

It seems pertinent to examine students after they have completed an internship at the *PS*. It can be assumed that opinions on the attractiveness of work in *PS* are based on certain personal beliefs. It would be worthwhile to establish whether these beliefs are stereotypical—that is, untrue and overly simplified.

Considering the interests of females working in *PS*, it would be valuable to continue this line of research. Data from existing literature can be used for this purpose. The literature shows that the motivations of females to work as police officers are: opportunities to help others, appropriate pay, and job stability (Raganella and White, 2004). Penitentiary studies show that females are constantly

reminded of their fragility, physical inferiority, and lack of fit within their organization (Burdett et al., 2018).

Conclusions

Based on the literature review and the current study, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. There is a practical need to study the *PO* social perceptions among potential *PS* employees. In the current study, *PS* internship interest in both subsamples was higher than the number of actual realized internships by over 10-fold.
2. Females expressed increased *PS* internship interest by two-fold in both the overall sample and the Polish subsample. Of all the impulsivity subscales, sensation seeking was the most significant. Higher sensation seeking led to lower *PS* internships and work interest in the overall sample.
3. Family tradition of working in uniform services was a moderator between perceived job control and *PS* work interest in the overall sample. Among participants with this family tradition, higher perceived job control was related to higher *PS* work interest. In the Hungarian sample, family traditions were predictors of *PS* work interest.
4. Perceived supervisor support was also significant for *PS* work interest. This is a statistically significant predictor in both the Polish and Hungarian subsamples.
5. The social perception of *POs* is an important aspect in understanding issues with recruitment to the *PS*. The limitations of this study require further exploration.

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Receipt Date: January 8, 2025

Receipt Date after correction: February 24, 2025

Print Acceptance Date: March 3, 2025