

**The Effect of Perceived Rapport and Commitment on Motivation  
in the Dutch Military Service Year**

Annemarie Beukers, s2612690

Department of Psychology, University of Twente

Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences (BMS)

Psychology of Conflict, Risk and Safety (PCRS)

First supervisor: dr. ir. P.W. de Vries

Second supervisor: dr. L. Weiher & dr. S.J. Watson

July 19<sup>th</sup>, 2024

## Abstract

*Introduction:* The Dutch armed forces seek an innovative human resource strategy to fill vacancies. Dienjaar (the Dutch Service Year), is one potential way to encourage youth to enlist in the military. As they are the future workforce, one of the objectives is to inspire them to pursue a professional career after completing their Dienjaar. Therefore, building rapport between recruits and their instructors and commanders is expected to affect the forms of commitment and subsequently motivate the recruits. Furthermore, it is assumed that affective commitment has the largest impact, and fulfilling expectations will also impact motivation.

*Methods:* Using a mixed-methods approach, a questionnaire collected information about the Dienjaar recruit's motivation to continue their career within the army, their perceived rapport, and the recruit's three types of commitment. Additionally, the questionnaire included open-ended questions to explore the quantitative answers more deeply. All Dienjaar recruits from the Navy, Army, Air Force, and Military Police received the questionnaire at three time points: at the start (at the end of their initial military training), middle and end of Dienjaar. In addition to the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were conducted during planned and unplanned work visits. These interviews provided detailed information about the constructs.

*Results:* Rapport appears to be a predictor of motivation and normative and affective commitment. Nevertheless, the predictive strength of normative and affective commitment diminishes towards the completion of Dienjaar, while motivation remains high. Therefore, other factors influencing motivation, such as expectations or perspective, must be taken into account.

*Discussion:* The results highlight how important it is for commanders and instructors to get personally involved in creating a supportive environment and thereby build rapport and affective commitment. Furthermore, when not meeting the recruits' expectations, this affects their affective commitment. The practical implications indicate that clear communication, transparent career paths and tailored information are essential to align recruits' expectations and keep motivation high. To ensure long-term retention and operational effectiveness within the armed forces, future strategies should focus on maintaining a high level of rapport and affective commitment once the recruits work within the armed forces.

*Keywords:* motivation, affective commitment, rapport, armed forces

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## **The Effect of Perceived Rapport and Commitment on Motivation in the Dutch Military Service Year**

In 2022, when the world's stability, security, and prosperity were at risk because of geopolitical tensions, the Dutch parliament felt the necessity of significantly investing in the armed forces. The period after the fall of the Berlin Wall was widely used to take stock and use the peace dividend for political investments and objectives other than the defence of territory using fighter planes, tanks, and warships. However, with war waged on European territory, extra funding is required and assigned to protect Dutch territory and its allies (Ministerie van Defensie, 2024). Ultimately, this contributes to the three main tasks of the four branches of the armed forces. The Dutch Navy, Army, Air Force and Military Police defend the national territory and its allies, defend the (international) rule of law and stability, and support civil authorities by assisting in disasters and crises.

As human capital is the most important asset of the Dutch armed forces, it is important to recruit, retain, and motivate its workforce (Ministerie van Defensie, 2024). Nevertheless, recent figures indicate that the armed forces constantly struggle to recruit and retain their military personnel. In 2023, almost 1 out of 6 jobs (14.6%) in the four armed forces branches were vacant (Ministerie van Defensie, 2024). Moreover, since the armed forces continue expanding their formation because of organisational rebuilding, the percentage of vacancies even rises further. These expansions hold across all branches of the armed forces and, in addition to existing vacancies, create even more vacancies within all armed forces branches. As a result, the current operational readiness of 89% results in over 9,000 vacancies, requiring all possible human resources processes to fill all vacancies with motivated workers.

Another crucial aspect is to target the workforce available. Since *Dienjaar* aims to recruit personnel between ages 18 and 27, their target group is Generation Z (Gen Z). Nevertheless, multiple generations are already working within the armed forces. Each group has a unique set of expectations, attitudes and motivations towards work (Kapoor & Solomon, 2011). This can become complicated because differences occur between generations. For instance, compared to more experienced generations, these youngsters require independence, stronger individuality, and a higher need for freedom (Jiří, 2016). Consequently, perceptions, norms and values can differ between older and younger individuals. Therefore, the armed forces should understand the work values, attitudes, and behaviours to manage them effectively (Evans, 2023). Moreover,

demographic information shows that the Dutch workforce is decreasing while the number of jobs is growing (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2024). As a result, it becomes even more important for organisations to focus on innovative human resource processes to match the needs of Gen Z. This suggests that the armed forces must understand what motivates individuals to work within their organisation and combine this knowledge with the main tasks of the armed forces to create expectations on the job and thereby encourage them to join the military and develop a career within the military.

Therefore, the Dutch armed forces are developing a new recruitment program. It is an initiative allowing recruits to have a contract for a year within the armed forces (Ministerie van Defensie, 2024), in which they can explore this organisation, and discover if there is an organisational match for them. It is called “Dienjaar” (Service Year). The initiative hopes for a significant transition from Dienjaar to military and civilian positions with permanent contracts, and enriching the Dutch reserve forces. The ambition is to fill all vacancies by 2030, enlist 1,000 young recruits by 2025, and increase to 3,000–4,000 by 2028. The program has been in progress as a pilot as of September 2023 and started with 133 recruits. These recruits, now appointed as reserves, will be spread across the four branches after receiving their basic military training to start working full-time as soldiers. They will perform the basic tasks of professional soldiers, which helps to alleviate the workload within the units and personnel shortages. During this year, they can discover whether a career in the armed forces suits them. After their year of service, this young workforce is offered several options within the Ministry of Defence: working as a full-time military, reserve, civilian employee or pursuing further military training.

Nonetheless, recruits must be motivated and inspired to stay in the army. Therefore, aspects that influence motivation must be analysed. Based on the self-determination theory, it appears that positive relationships and establishing rapport between individuals have a positive effect on a person's intrinsic motivation (Ryan & Deci, 2000). The perceived level of rapport and the various forms of commitment can ultimately affect the recruits' motivation to choose a career within the defence organisation after their Dienjaar. Therefore, to keep recruits motivated, building rapport and experiencing positive relationships is expected to have a positive effect on recruits' feelings towards the armed forces. This type of commitment is what the organisation should want to uphold because it makes employees not want to simply leave the organisation despite, for instance, getting a financially good offer from another company. Since retaining

soldiers within the armed forces is not primarily about money but about experiencing team spirit or having relevant work content (Ministerie van Defensie, 2024), it is of added value to know how the Dienjaar recruits score on the aspects of rapport, commitment, and motivation.

Therefore, the research question of this study is: *To what extent do rapport and commitment influence the motivation of Dienjaar (Service Year) recruits to continue their military service after finishing this specific gap year (Dienjaar)?*

## **1.1 Theoretical Framework**

This research investigates how rapport affects the motivation of dienjaar recruits and how they perceive their interactions with their military instructors and commanders. It also examines whether the three types of organisational commitment mediate in these relationships and how recruits are connected to the armed forces. Ultimately, these aspects may influence their retention or (early) departure (Allen & Meyer, 1990).

### ***1.1.1 Motivation***

Motivation is an important factor in determining an individual's behaviour and level of involvement. Multiple theories, such as the self-determination theory and Maslow's self-actualization (1943) purport that people are motivated when their behaviours align with their interests and values. According to Ryan and Deci (2000), this involves the underlying attitudes and goals that motivate behaviour, or the reasons behind actions. Consequently, a person who is activated to pursue a goal is said to be motivated (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Nevertheless, people's motivation levels and orientation can also vary. However, people's motivation levels and orientations can also vary with an individual's determination to succeed in a training programme (Deci & Ryan, 2008). Therefore, motivation is an important aspect of recruits completing their Dienjaar and, eventually, developing a career within the armed forces.

Based on the different motives or goals that lead to an action, self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985) distinguishes between two types of motivation. First, extrinsic motivation by getting a reward or avoiding punishment, and second, intrinsic motivation by wishing to do something because it is perceived as genuinely interesting or enjoyable. Moreover, internal factors, such as individual drive and skill mastery, fuel intrinsic motivation (Black & Deci,

2000). These two types of motivation can influence the recruits' decision to continue working within the armed forces.

While being trained within the military, instructors or managers influence both the recruit's intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. If they build a socially cohesive and psychologically safe environment within their (training) platoon and succeed in establishing positive rapport between them and the recruits, this has a positive effect on recruits' motivation (Beukers, 2023). Moreover, numerous factors affect motivation, including needs, personal values and interests, expected outcomes, and perceived abilities (Kahn, 1992). If recruits create expectations of activities they will perform within their Dienjaar and they get the opportunity to master these military activities, there is a high chance their expectations will be met. This stimulates their competence, autonomy, and relationship with the organisation (Black & Deci, 2000), therefore motivating them to finish their Dienjaar.

In addition, determining how motivation develops and defining recruits' motivation at different points in their Dienjaar also provides insight into how the development of recruits' motivation is positively affected. In line with the theories mentioned above, when the Dienjaar offers a supportive learning environment, sets clear expectations, and offers feedback, this invests in the recruit's motivation. Ultimately, instructors and commanders can use these aspects to invest in retention therefore influencing the intention to develop a career within the army. Therefore, measuring the recruit's motivation provides insight into the motivation's development, the context's impact, and how their leaders can enhance it.

### ***1.1.2 Commitment***

From an organisational perspective, to define commitment, Allen and Meyer (1990) distinguished three different types of commitment a person can acquire related to an organization. First, there is continuous commitment, based on salary and employment conditions. Continuous commitment stems from cost considerations, both economic and social, that would arise if the employee left the organisation, but is built through valuable elements such as time and money that bind employees to the organisation. Continuous commitment is a more instrumental evaluation of how sufficient the pay is or that they are considering leaving because they can get more payment from another organisation or company. Second is normative commitment, which is based on the employee's norms and values. Normative commitment refers

to a commitment that stems from a perceived moral obligation towards the organization, such as reciprocity due to educational investment. In addition, it is about the perceived obligations to the organisation because of a person's values. Third, a person can generate affective commitment to an organization. This emotional type of commitment is based on the passionate ties the employee develops with the organisation, thinking of camaraderie, and perceiving positive emotional feelings towards the organisation and its employees, resulting in positive work experiences (Allen & Meyer, 1990). This type of commitment is the one which connects employees the strongest to its organisation (Matzler & Renzl, 2007), and according to Forsyth (2018), military personnel possess this type of commitment the most. The armed forces must therefore encourage the development of affective commitment and support the commitment process to give recruits in Dienjaar a reason to stay in the military.

### ***1.1.3 Rapport***

While commitment is primarily about attachment to the organisation as a whole, rapport defines the specific relationships built between employees and their managers or instructors. It can be defined as a working alliance or cooperative partnership that denotes the dedication of two entities to a common goal (Weiher, 2020). Moreover, rapport includes aspects of camaraderie, safety and trust and is therefore proven effective in relationship building (Collins et al., 2005; Gabbert et al., 2021; Weiher et al., 2023). Since Dienjaar recruits first undergo basic military training, a positive relationship with their instructors is essential to foster affective commitment so that they feel part of the organisation.

In any form of human interaction, private or professional, building rapport supports and strengthens the establishment of more profound relationships between people (Gabbert et al., 2021). In addition, it has long been known that building rapport is essential for creating a productive interpersonal climate (Collins et al., 2005). In their research, Weiher (2020) and Gabbert et al. (2021) elaborate on general definitions by describing rapport as dynamic with the potential to evolve negatively and positively over time. Therefore, it is important to measure the development of rapport throughout Dienjaar.

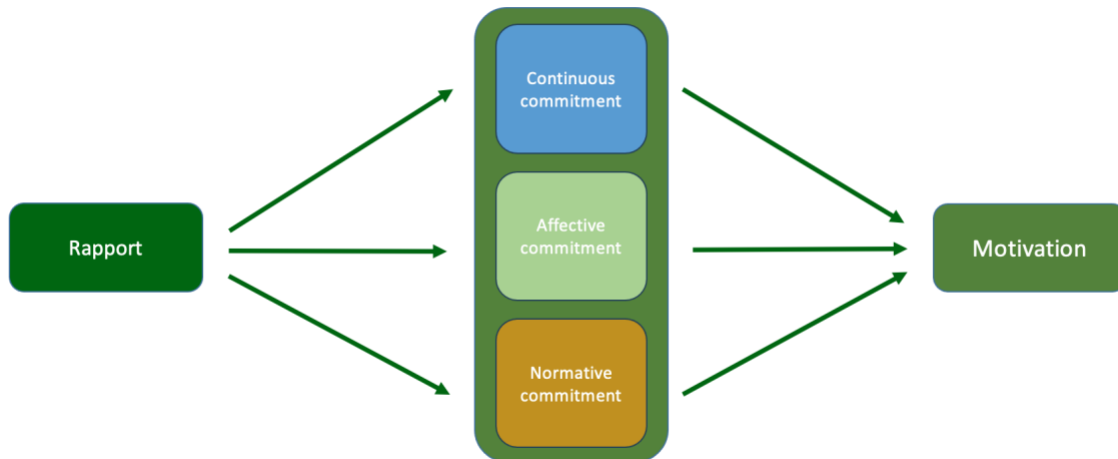
Because Dienjaar is a one-year course, there may be a high perception of rapport in the first few months when one is undergoing intensive training. This can ensure high-intensity rapport with their instructors. However, a decrease in rapport may occur when recruits transfer to

their new unit after training, leading to the disintegration of the group. If rapport develops poorly, the risk of failure or dropping out may increase. Due to the rebuilding of relationships within the unit, involving individuals who have worked within the unit for some time and hence do not have the same Dienjaar background, it is possible that the rapport fails but that it can be repaired in the following period (Weiher et al., 2023). Therefore, commanders must know the impact of building rapport and use this knowledge to invest in affective commitment.

## **1.2 Current Study**

### ***1.2.1 Conceptual Model***

In conclusion, to fill all vacancies within the armed forces, the motivation of recruits to develop a career after completing their Dienjaar is crucial. When instructors and commanders actively contribute to a supportive learning environment and work to align recruits' values and interests, building rapport and reinforcing the different forms of commitment is achieved. This increases the likelihood that a recruit will want to pursue a career in the armed forces, thereby increasing military personnel readiness, which is one of the organisational objectives of Dienjaar. Therefore, rapport is assumed to positively impact commitment and recruits' overall motivation. Furthermore, it is expected that all three forms of commitment have a degree of influence and mediate the relationship between rapport and motivation. As a result, the hypothesis of this research is tested: *rapport influences motivation and this is mediated by continuous, normative, and affective commitment*. The conceptual model (Figure 1) illustrates the expected relationships between the constructs described in the theoretical framework.

**Figure 1***Conceptual Model*

## 2. Methods

### 2.1 Participants and Design

This study was based on data which surveyed perceived rapport, commitment, and motivation at three fixed points in their Dienjaar: one week before their initial military training (first time point), halfway through their year of service (second time point), and one month before completing their Dienjaar (third time point) (Figure 2). Before the research project began, the University of Twente granted ethical approval (approval number 230571). Furthermore, the Inspector General of the Royal Netherlands Armed Forces (on behalf of the Ministry of Defence) also approved the start of the questionnaire.

Before the recruits received the link to the questionnaire, the liaison officers from the various military branches were first informed in detail about the study. This gave them sufficient background knowledge to answer participant's questions when needed. For the first questionnaire, these points of contact were also asked to share the questionnaire's link and QR

code with the participants. For the second and third questionnaires, Dienjaar management provided the recruits' email addresses for direct mailing of the questionnaires to the participants.

To answer the research question and test the hypothesis, all Dienjaar recruits from the cohort starting in 2023 were digitally sent the questionnaire and thereby invited to participate. In addition, semi-structured interviews were conducted throughout the year during working visits to the units where recruits were assigned. The questionnaire data provided three fixed questions to ask and were used as guidance during the interviews. The interviews deepened the subscales on rapport, commitment and motivation. However, not all participants were interviewed in this process. Instead, recruits who were available during various work visits were interviewed. Additionally, simultaneously the motivation of the instructors, managers, and colleagues who trained and worked with Dienjaar recruits was measured. However, in this thesis, the focus is on the results of Dienjaar recruits in cohort 2023.

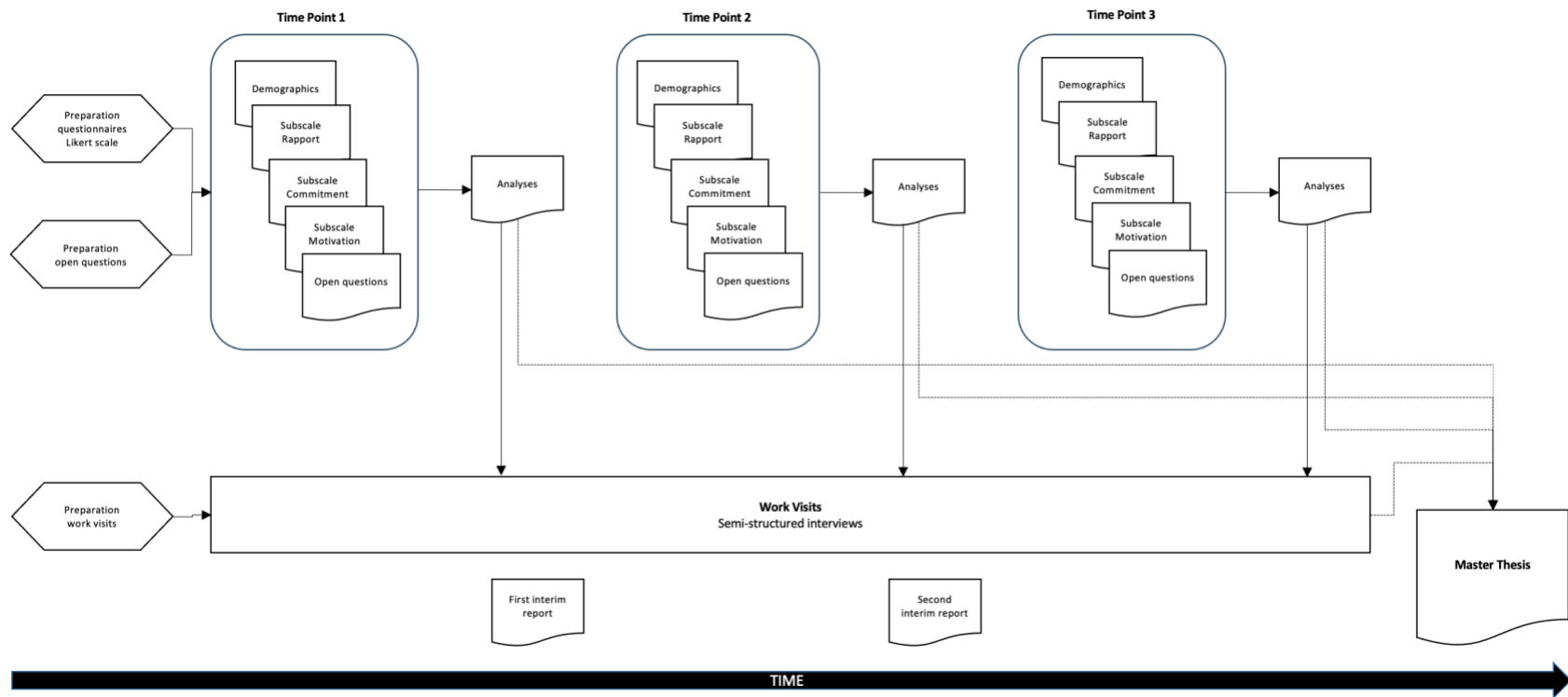
**Figure 2***Research Process Flow*

Table 1 shows the number of participants per time point, as well as the specifics about the age of men and women participating in the study. On average of the three samples, 64% joined the Army (CLAS), 11% joined the Navy (CZSK), 10% joined the Air Force (CLSK), and 14% joined the Military Police (KMAR). Furthermore, regarding the education level, most recruits completed a VWO degree (30%), followed by a HAVO degree (19%) an MBO 4 degree (18%), a WO degree (10%), an HBO degree (9%), an MBO 3 degree (8%), and an MBO 2 degree (3%). According to the recruitment experts, this cohort has a high education level. When searching for specific data, it appeared that the recruitment tool had a bug, so no comparable data (of regular military recruits) could be used.

**Table 1**

*Demographics per Time Point*

Questionnaire	Total	Men			Women		
	<i>n</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M<sub>age</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>age</sub></i>	<i>n</i>	<i>M<sub>age</sub></i>	<i>SD<sub>age</sub></i>
Time point 1	81	66	21.70	2.56	15	21.80	2.43
Time point 2	67	56	20.90	2.63	11	20.40	2.03
Time point 3	36	31	21.70	2.57	5	22.00	3.74

## 2.2 Quantitative Procedure

Data was collected using three questionnaires (Appendix A) via Qualtrics, as well as by conducting (informal) meetings and interviews. These questionnaires were asked to fill out at three time points within the recruits' Dienjaar. Every question was translated and presented in Dutch. As the participants were questioned in different parts of their gap year, the questionnaires differed in the open questions. The questionnaires required the recruits to fill out 60 items on a Likert-scale including rapport, commitment, and motivation.

### 2.2.1 First Questionnaire

When the recruits completed their military training, they received the link and/or QR code via their instructor. The questionnaire also centred on their military training and the

perceived rapport they had with their instructor. Since they were in training, they had no automatic access to their military email account. Therefore, it was decided to approach the instructors so they could distribute the link and QR-code or send the email to the recruits and plan on using the computers so the recruits could reach their email. The email also briefly explained the research goal and the urgency of participation.

The recruits had to scan the QR code or click the email's attached link to get started. The questionnaire's information page provided participants with features about the research before they answered the questions in a digital setting. When continuing the study, they automatically signed their informed consent. Subsequently, participants were requested to provide their demographic data such as age, gender, educational level, and prior military experience. Following these inquiries, the survey presented three validated sub-questionnaires, focusing on the concepts of rapport (21 questions, Rapport Scales for Investigative Interviews and Interrogations 2 (RS3i) Interviewee Version (Duke et al., 2018), commitment (23 questions, The measurement and antecedents of continuous, normative, and affective commitment to the organization (Allen & Meyer, 1990), and motivation (16 questions, Revised Achievement Motives Scale (AMS-R) (Lang & Fries, 2006), along with additional questions).

### ***2.2.2 Second and Third Questionnaires***

Halfway through and at the end of their Dienjaar, the difference was that the second and third questionnaires were used to gather data on the period spent working in their operational unit with their commander(s) and direct colleagues. Therefore, the questions were adapted, and the word "instructor" was replaced with "commander". Furthermore, the communication with the recruits differed, as the Dienjaar management provided the recruit's private email addresses. This changed their access to the questionnaire, therefore making them flexible enough to fill it out whenever they liked. Nevertheless, since they had this opportunity, it was decided to contact their commanders to point out to the recruits the urgency of sharing their insights and encourage them to fill it out. Lastly, the information page of the questionnaire underwent some adaptation, as it already contained information about the study.

## **2.3 Qualitative Procedure**

### ***2.3.1 Open-ended Questions***

Open-ended questions were added to the questionnaires and their quantitative components to obtain specific information about participants' views on motivation, commitment and rapport. The first questionnaire included five open questions which covered more detailed questions about specific motivation and expectations. Examples are: "What improvements between you and the instructor can increase your motivation?" and "Did the expectations you had for the Dienjaar come true? If not, would you please explain?" Furthermore, the second questionnaire had seven open questions in total, focusing on the motivation related to the commander and unit. For example: "What improvements between you and your commander can increase your motivation?" The third questionnaire was conducted towards the completion of Dienjaar, therefore amongst other questions asking: "What is the reason for you to finish the Dienjaar?" All the open questions allowed participants to elaborate on the quantitative questions and offer additional details to the preceding Likert-scale query. At the end, participants were asked to electronically submit their answers to complete the study, and their records were securely kept for analysis.

### ***2.3.2 Semi-structured Interviews***

Following the analysis of the questionnaires, a semi-structured interview scheme was developed (Appendix B). To gather more detailed information, visits were planned to the units where Dienjaar recruits work. Structured visits were planned, with the unit creating a program and timeline to enable Dienjaar recruits to share their information. Furthermore, nonstructured work visits were also held, visiting Dienjaar trainees in the workplace and simultaneously questioning (and getting oral consent) to obtain further information on their perceived rapport, commitment and motivation (Appendix C). In addition, approximately 65 people were interviewed during the field visits. No demographic data were asked to avoid the interview becoming structured like a formal interview thereby losing the spontaneity of the interviews. When the interviews were finished, a summary of the highlights of the visit and the interview was documented.

## **2.4 Quantitative Measures**

The three subscales of rapport, commitment, and motivation that comprise the questionnaire were chosen because they fit the concepts under examination and made sense in combination (Appendix A). Furthermore, the current study employed 60 items, five of which required reversal. Participants were able to respond to the items on a Likert scale (1–5). "Strongly disagree" (=1) and "strongly agree" (=5) were the two extremes of the Likert scale.

### ***2.4.1 Rapport***

Rapport was quantified using the Rapport Scales for Interrogations and Investigative Interviews (RS3i) Source Version (Duke et al., 2018). To improve the questionnaire's fit for the present situation, "interviewer" was changed to "instructor" or "commander". Additionally, 21 items were employed, wherein responses were provided on a 5-point Likert scale. The questionnaire's items evaluated the instructor's ability to communicate and how he built rapport with the aspiring NCO. One of the items asked was: "My instructor is good at his/her job." There was good internal consistency in the Rs3i source version scale used to assess the rapport level between instructors and aspiring NCOs (Table 2). When removing any other item from the subscale this would not have a significant impact on the reliability. This suggests that this subscale can be regarded as reliable.

### ***2.4.2 Commitment***

The level of commitment to the armed forces was measured using the questionnaire of Allen and Meyer (1990). This questionnaire uses 23 items to measure continuous, normative, and affective commitment levels. The items connected to affective commitment focused on the degree of a worker's emotional connection, identification, and engagement with the organisation. Normative commitment assesses the employee's sense of duty or undertaking to the armed forces in light of societal norms or individual values. Lastly, continuous commitment evaluated the employees' perception of the expenses such as lost benefits or financial outlay of quitting working within the armed forces. One of the items per commitment type asked was: "I feel emotionally attached to Dienjaar" (affective commitment), "If I resign it will be difficult to find

another job” (continuous commitment), and “It is unseemly to transfer (early) from one organisation to another” (normative commitment).

In addition, a reliability analysis was conducted on all three commitment forms of the commitment questionnaire. For all three types of commitment, the results of the reliability analysis revealed acceptable internal consistencies (Table 2). Furthermore, eliminating one of the 23 items would not substantially improve the reliability. This suggests that this subscale can be regarded as reliable.

### ***2.4.3 Motivation***

Internal and external factors affect the two motivation types; intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Both forms of motivation were examined in the questionnaire. The Revised Achievement Motives Scale (AMS-R) was employed by Lang and Fries (2006) to assess the intrinsic motivation of participants. This tool assesses behaviours connected to achievement and is an updated version of the Achievement Motives Scale (AMS). Participants found the AMS-R to be more user-friendly due to its shorter length compared to the AMS. It also assessed two different things: hope for success and fear of failure (Lang & Fries, 2006). The AMS-R was also given to participants on a 5-point Likert scale. One of the AMS-R items asked was: “I get excited by assignments that test me.” In addition, to fit the dataset, five questions had to be reversed.

Nevertheless, the AMS-R did not measure all aspects of extrinsic motivation in the relationship between leaders and recruits. Therefore, the AMS-R was expanded with six new items to evaluate participants' extrinsic motivation. These additional questions revealed the recruit's external motivation factors and how these factors impacted completing their training or Dienjaar and the role the instructor or commander had in this process. Along with the ten AMS-R questions, it provided a more thorough understanding of how motivation is currently perceived during Dienjaar. One of the items asked was: "I am motivated to complete Dienjaar training.”

Subsequently, to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire, a reliability analysis was done on both the AMS-R and the six additional questions. Reliability analysis results showed strong internal consistency (Table 2). Also, when one of the 16 items is removed, the reliability does not increase further. This suggests that this subscale can be regarded as reliable.

**Table 2***Cronbach's Alpha per Construct and Time Point*

Questionnaire	Rapport	Continuous Commitment	Normative Commitment	Affective Commitment	Motivation
Time point 1	.93	.73	.84	.76	.81
Time point 2	.91	.69	.83	.73	.73
Time point 3	.94	.70	.80	.77	.68

## 2.5 Qualitative Measures

### 2.5.1 Open Questions First Questionnaire

The responses were coded manually and all codes were determined after careful review. In the first questionnaire, participants had to answer five open-ended questions aimed at gaining insight into how the group or instructor could improve their motivation, whether Dienjaar is what they expected it to be, and whether they aspire to have a military career when Dienjaar is completed. These open-ended questions allowed participants to clarify their answers, giving more insight into their expectations and prospects and how their motivation could be enhanced. The five open-ended questions asked were:

- What improvements within the group can increase your motivation?
- What improvements between you and the instructor can increase your motivation?
- What do you think are the reasons people quit Dienjaar?
- What is the reason for you to finish Dienjaar?
- Did the expectations you had for Dienjaar come true? If not, would you please explain?

These questions were asked to interpret the recruits' perceived connection (after completing their initial military training) with the armed forces. Thereby, recruits were asked about factors in their training affecting their motivation, the reasons for completing their Dienjaar, and whether their expectations from Dienjaar were met or not. Appendix D contains an overview of all the questions asked.

### ***2.5.2 Open Questions Second and Third Questionnaires***

The difference between the first time point and other time points is that in this phase of their Dienjaar, the recruits work within their units, and therefore the commanders and their direct colleagues give input into their perceived rapport, commitment, and motivation. As a result, the questions were rephrased to fit the context of the unit. Moreover, because the questions were asked at different time points, these questions were dropped or rephrased:

- What improvements between you and the instructor can increase your motivation?
- What do you think are the reasons for people to quit the Dienjaar?

Furthermore, extra questions were added to match the operational context at the unit and fit the time point the Dienjaar was in. For time point two, these questions were added:

- What improvements between you and your commander can increase your motivation?
- What improvements between you and your colleagues can increase your motivation?
- What improvements within the Dienjaar organisation can increase your motivation?
- What expectations did you have before starting the Dienjaar?

For time point three, all questions related to motivation were rephrased to fit the current context as the Dienjaar developed towards the end:

- Did your motivation increase or decrease during Dienjaar and what is the reason for this?

### ***2.5.3 Semi-Structured Interviews***

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with recruits during visits to the various units where they work to collect more detailed qualitative data. The purpose of these interviews was to learn more about the recruits' perspectives and experiences regarding their Dienjaar. The questions were determined by interpreting the data obtained and identifying what was needed to enhance understanding of the data so far. It provided more detailed information about their perceived rapport, and the commitment they developed, but it also identified the role the instructors, commanders, and colleagues had in the development of their motivation. Moreover, it provided insight into the recruit's expectations and whether the organisation was able to meet these expectations and gave additional insight into the context in which the recruits operate.

Topics covered during the interviews included their views on the recruits' readiness to develop a career within the armed forces, their intention to continue working within the armed

forces as military, civilian or reservist, as well as their perception of their input as instructors, leaders or colleagues on the motivation of the Dienjaar recruits and what they considered necessary to increase motivation to continue working within the organisation. In every interview, these three questions were asked: "What is your impression of the process of Dienjaar?", "What ambition do you have after completing your Dienjaar?", and "Does the organisation/leadership facilitate this ambition?" In addition, all visits were summarised in a report describing the highlights and key points discussed.

## ***2.6 Data Analysis***

The data analysis of the quantitative part of this research is integrated in the result section. For the qualitative part, the analysis began with defining each response item by item to identify and categorize concepts, ideas, or themes. This initial coding phase aimed to gather as much information as possible and create a comprehensive list of codes that reflected the content of the responses. Codes were generated based on the inductive approach of labelling participants' words and expressions.

Additionally, links and relationships between the codes were identified after generating a preliminary set of codes. The same codes were combined into more general categories or themes, with sub-themes or variants identified within each group. Through this process, patterns or relationships between the codes were found and the data were organised hierarchically.

The study's findings include a summary of the coding scheme's composition and structure. The codes were applied to the participants' responses. These hierarchically arranged sub-codes, each of which contains a portion of the main code. A more detailed and precise coding of the interviews was achieved by adding a hierarchical layer to the coding scheme. Appendix D displays each code, containing multiple subcodes containing the details of the overarching code.

### 3. Results

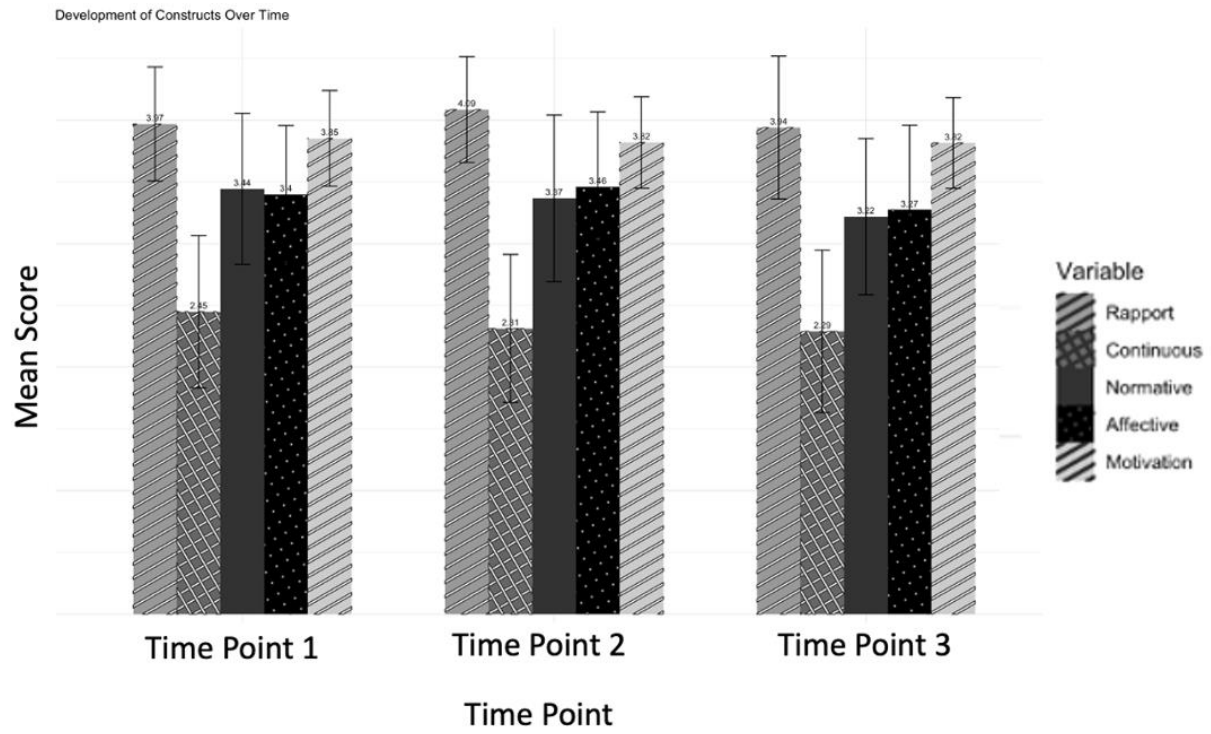
This section presents the results of Dienjaar recruits who began their training in September 2023. It entails a separate quantitative and qualitative part.

#### 3.1 Quantitative Results

##### 3.1.1 Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive statistical analysis entailed calculating all means of the constructs measured in the three questionnaires, their standard deviations, and the correlations of the variables among themselves giving insight into the direction and strength of the associations. As Figure 3 shows, except for continuous commitment, the scores are all above the midpoint of the scales, implying that Dienjaar recruits on average rate their perceived degree of rapport, normative and affective commitment, and motivation positively. Related to *Rapport*, this implies that after finishing their initial military training, the recruits perceived a high level of rapport between them and their instructors. Furthermore, it demonstrates that after completing half of Dienjaar, recruits still perceive a high level of rapport. At this point in their year, rapport continues to be built between them and their commanders.

As Table 3 demonstrates, *Continuous Commitment* is in all questionnaires perceived as lower than the scale midpoint indicating the recruits have less commitment towards the military organisation because of money or employment conditions. Nevertheless, at all time points, *Rapport* has a positive correlation with *Motivation* and was in all questionnaires a significant predictor. Furthermore, the participants obtained a high level of forms of commitment related to *Normative Commitment* and *Affective Commitment*. This led to a high perceived level of *Motivation* resulting in a strong feeling of motivation to continue their Dienjaar journey, implying that investing in rapport and these two commitment types increases motivation. Interestingly, although *Rapport* correlated positively with *Affective Commitment* and *Normative Commitment* the first two questionnaires were significant, whereas this relationship was not significant in the last questionnaire.

**Figure 3***Development of Constructs Over Time*

**Table 3***Correlation Matrix Separate Questionnaires*

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Min	Max	1	2	3	4
Time point 1								
1. Rapport	3.97	0.46	2.48	4.81				
2. Continuous Commitment	2.45	0.62	1.29	4.00	-.07			
3. Normative Commitment	3.44	0.61	1.13	5.00	<b>.29</b>	<b>.34</b>		
4. Affective Commitment	3.40	0.56	2.13	4.75	<b>.43</b>	.09	<b>.60</b>	
5. Motivation	3.85	0.39	2.88	4.69	<b>.53</b>	.01	<b>.43</b>	<b>.72</b>
Time point 2								
1. Rapport	4.09	0.43	2.86	4.76				
2. Continuous Commitment	2.31	0.60	1.00	3.71	-.01			
3. Normative Commitment	3.37	0.68	2.13	5.00	<b>.40</b>	<b>.35</b>		
4. Affective Commitment	3.46	0.61	1.63	4.88	<b>.47</b>	.21	<b>.42</b>	
5. Motivation	3.82	0.37	3.00	4.94	<b>.57</b>	.11	<b>.27</b>	<b>.61</b>
Time point 3								
1. Rapport	3.94	0.58	1.95	4.81				
2. Continuous Commitment	2.29	0.66	1.00	4.14	-.05			
3. Normative Commitment	3.22	0.63	1.88	4.88	.25	<b>.54</b>		
4. Affective Commitment	3.27	0.69	1.50	4.63	.14	<b>.39</b>	<b>.64</b>	
5. Motivation	3.82	0.37	2.88	4.56	<b>.40</b>	.13	.31	<b>.38</b>

Note. italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

### 3.1.2 Inferential Statistics

For every mediation analysis executed, the residuals' normality was checked using Q-Q plots to determine substantial deviations from the reference line indicating violations of normality. Moreover, examining the residuals vs. fitted values plots led to checking the assumptions of linearity and homoscedasticity.

When merging the results of all questionnaires, a mixed-effects model was performed to test for the fixed effect of the time points when the questionnaires were executed and to account for the repeated measures within participants. The output showed the significance of the direct effects, while the Sobel test was used to determine whether the indirect effects were significant.

**Parametric Assumptions.** The plots showed random dispersion of the residuals along the horizontal axis with no discernible patterns, confirming the linearity assumption. Furthermore, the residuals' spread seemed constant throughout the fitted value range, suggesting that the homoscedasticity assumption was somewhat met. Lastly, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values indicate that the multicollinearity assumptions are also met. These results suggest that the linear relationships between the independent variables *Rapport*, *Continuous Commitment*, *Normative Commitment*, and *Affective Commitment* and the dependent variable *Motivation* were appropriate for the models used in the mediation analysis.

**Mediation Analyses.** For the separate questionnaires, mediation analyses were performed using “Hayes’ PROCESS macro” to examine whether *Continuous Commitment*, *Normative Commitment*, and *Affective Commitment* mediate the relationship between *Rapport* (IV) and *Motivation* (DV). The results reported the indirect effects with their bootstrapped confidence intervals, thereby evaluating the significance of the indirect effects using confidence intervals (CIs). This is a preferred approach because bootstrapping does not rely on the assumption of normality of the sample distribution of the indirect effect, which may be skewed. The indirect effect is considered significant if the confidence interval does not include zero.

To control for each separate time point, multiple mediation analyses were conducted to examine the relationship between *Rapport* (IV) and *Motivation* (DV) and whether *Continuous Commitment*, *Normative Commitment*, and *Affective Commitment* mediated it. Table 4 presents the results of the mediation analysis using a Process Hayes Model for RStudio to define the analyses for all separate questionnaires.

Before examining the mediation analyses, *Rapport* was tested as a direct predictor of *Motivation*. The first questionnaire demonstrates that rapport explains 28% variance in motivation. This is comparable to the second questionnaire demonstrating that rapport explains

31% variance in motivation and the third questionnaire explains 14% variance in motivation. Furthermore, it revealed at all time points a significant direct effect of *Rapport* on *Motivation*.

Moreover, the mediation effect through *Affective Commitment* was also significant in the first two questionnaires. Likewise, the first measurement of *Normative Commitment* also appeared to be significant. In contrast, *Affective Commitment* appeared in the third questionnaire as insignificant as a mediator. Also, the second and third measurements of *Normative Commitment* and all indirect effects through *Continuous Commitment* were non-significant, suggesting these variables do not function as a mediator.

In conclusion, when analysing the mediation analysis across the three time points, it is demonstrated that *Affective Commitment*, as well as *Normative commitment*, mediate the relationship between *Rapport* and *Motivation* initially. However, the influence of these two commitment types reduces over time, emphasizing the temporal dynamics of these psychological concepts.

**Table 4***Mediation Effects and Direct Effects of Separate Time Points of Rapport (IV) on Motivation (DV)*

<i>Path</i>	<i>Direct Effect</i>				<i>Indirect Effect</i>			
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>95% CI LL</i>	<i>95% CI UL</i>
Time point 1								
Rapport	<b><i>0.44</i></b>	<b><i>.08</i></b>	<b><i>5.54</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>				
Continuous Commitment	<b><i>0.45</i></b>	<b><i>.08</i></b>	<b><i>5.53</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>	<i>&lt;-0.01</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>-0.04</i>	<i>0.02</i>
Normative Commitment	<b><i>0.37</i></b>	<b><i>.08</i></b>	<b><i>4.67</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>0.01</i>	<i>0.17</i>
Affective Commitment	<b><i>0.23</i></b>	<b><i>.07</i></b>	<b><i>3.30</i></b>	<b><i>.001</i></b>	<i>0.22</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>0.12</i>	<i>0.34</i>
Time point 2								
Rapport	<b><i>0.49</i></b>	<b><i>.09</i></b>	<b><i>5.54</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>				
Continuous Commitment	<b><i>0.49</i></b>	<b><i>.09</i></b>	<b><i>5.57</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>	<i>&lt;0.01</i>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>-0.04</i>	<i>0.04</i>
Normative Commitment	<b><i>0.47</i></b>	<b><i>.10</i></b>	<b><i>4.86</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>-0.08</i>	<i>0.16</i>
Affective Commitment	<b><i>0.31</i></b>	<b><i>.09</i></b>	<b><i>3.49</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>	<i>0.18</i>	<i>0.06</i>	<i>0.07</i>	<i>0.29</i>
Time point 3								
Rapport	<i>0.26</i>	<i>.09</i>	<i>2.63</i>	<i>.012</i>				
Continuous Commitment	<i>0.26</i>	<i>.10</i>	<i>2.68</i>	<i>.011</i>	<i>&lt;-0.01</i>	<i>0.02</i>	<i>-0.06</i>	<i>0.04</i>
Normative Commitment	<i>0.22</i>	<i>.10</i>	<i>2.26</i>	<i>.030</i>	<i>.03</i>	<i>0.03</i>	<i>-0.01</i>	<i>0.10</i>
Affective Commitment	<i>0.23</i>	<i>.09</i>	<i>2.41</i>	<i>.021</i>	<i>.03</i>	<i>0.04</i>	<i>-0.04</i>	<i>0.12</i>

Note. Bootstrapped standard errors (SE) and confidence intervals (CI) are used for the indirect effects. LLCI and ULCI refer to the lower and upper limits of the 95% confidence interval.

Note. italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

**Mediation Effects Including Fixed and Random Effects.** To execute this analysis, all data of the different variables on the different time points are combined in one dataset. Three mixed-effects models were conducted to examine the relationship between the predictor variable *Rapport*, the three potential mediator variables *Continuous Commitment*, *Normative Commitment*, and *Affective Commitment*, on the outcome variable *Motivation*. Thereby, the variable representing the questionnaire sampling time point is included as a fixed effect. Additionally, the variable representing the respondents who participated in the three questionnaires was added as a random effect.

The results (Table 5) reveal the direct effect of *Rapport* on *Continuous Commitment* is not significant as well as the indirect effect. Nevertheless, the direct effect of *Rapport* on *Normative Commitment* and indirect effect of *Normative Commitment* reveal this type of commitment to be significant. Likewise, the direct effect of *Rapport* on *Affective Commitment* and the indirect effect of *Affective Commitment* also demonstrates this type of commitment being significant. When including both fixed and random effects, *Rapport* has no significant direct or indirect effect on *Continuous Commitment*.

In conclusion, *Rapport* significantly impacts *Normative* and *Affective Commitment* and, in addition, also has an indirect significant effect on *Motivation* through these two mediators indicating *Rapport* substantially influences these commitment forms, which can result in a positive impact on motivation.

**Table 5**

*Direct and Indirect Mediation Effects when Accounting for Fixed and Random Effects on Rapport (IV) on the Three Commitment Types (Mediators) on Motivation (DV)*

Path	Direct Effect				Indirect Effect		
	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
Continuous Commitment	0.37	0.05	7.50	.188	<0.01	<0.01	.747
Normative Commitment	<b>0.33</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>6.53</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>	<b>.002</b>
Affective Commitment	<b>0.24</b>	<b>0.05</b>	<b>5.30</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>	<b>0.14</b>	<b>&lt;0.01</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>

Note: italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

### 3.1.3 Exploratory Analyses

#### **Linear Regressions Including the Time Point and Participant as Repeated**

**Measures.** When merging the datasets and taking fixed and random effects into account, a combined linear mixed effects model was performed (Table 6) to define the relationship between the independent variables *Rapport*, *Continuous Commitment*, *Normative Commitment*, and *Affective Commitment* on the dependent variable *Motivation*. This model included a fixed effect of the time point of the questionnaire taken and a random effect of controlling for the participants ( $var = 0.04$ ,  $SD = 0.19$ ). The results indicate that when merging all datasets and taking fixed and random effects into account, *Affective Commitment* significantly influences *Motivation*, while *Continuous* and *Normative Commitment* does not. Furthermore, the motivation scores showed no significant changes across the three time points, indicating stability in motivation over time.

**Table 6***Combined Linear Regressions Model Including Repeated Measures*

Path	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Rapport	<b><i>0.21</i></b>	<b><i>0.05</i></b>	<b><i>3.95</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>
Continuous Commitment	-0.04	0.04	-1.04	.302
Normative Commitment	0.04	0.05	0.84	.404
Affective Commitment	<b><i>0.37</i></b>	<b><i>0.04</i></b>	<b><i>8.27</i></b>	<b><i>&lt;.001</i></b>
Questionnaire (Time point)	-0.08	0.04	-2.01	.047

Note. italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

The estimated marginal means of *Motivation* measured at the three time points were calculated to define how motivation levels varied over time when controlling for *Continuous*, *Normative*, and *Affective Commitment*. Table 7 demonstrates these values.

**Table 7***Estimated Marginal Means of Motivation*

Time Point	<i>EMM</i>	<i>SE</i>
Time point 1	2.50	0.05
Time point 2	2.48	0.05
Time point 3	2.51	0.05

**Analysis of Ambition.** A multinomial logistic regression was used to determine if *Affective Commitment* predicted whether recruits wanted to pursue their military career, and if this significantly differed from the other two types of commitment (Table 8). It appeared that *Affective Commitment* was a significant predictor while the other two types of commitment were not. Moreover, significant negative coefficients for the categories "reserve", "civilian employee", "Doubting" and "No connection" suggest that higher affective involvement reduces the probability of choosing these categories compared to the reference category "Career soldier". Furthermore, Table 9 shows the percentages by time point of what the recruits were aiming for (at that time point) after completing their Dienjaar.

**Table 8***Multinomial Logistic Regression on Recruit's Ambition*

Path	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>p</i>
<b>Continuous Commitment</b>			
Reserve	<b>-1.02</b>	<b>0.46</b>	<.001
Civilian Employee	-2.11	2.03	.945
Doubting	<b>0.14</b>	<b>0.29</b>	<.001
Ambassador	-1.56	1.85	.583
No ambition continuing working	-0.33	0.68	.634
<b>Normative Commitment</b>			
Reserve	<b>-2.61</b>	<b>0.60</b>	<.001
Civilian Employee	-2.21	1.88	.575
Doubting	<b>-1.06</b>	<b>0.33</b>	<.001
Ambassador	-4.74	1.73	.133
No ambition continuing working	-1.01	0.76	.184
<b>Affective Commitment</b>			
Reserve	<b>-1.42</b>	<b>0.51</b>	<.001
Civilian Employee	-2.23	1.63	.328
Doubting	<b>-1.60</b>	<b>0.37</b>	<.001
Ambassador	-37.49	32.68	.965
No ambition continuing working	-0.47	0.79	.549

Note. italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

Note. 'Beroepsmilitair' set as the reference category

**Table 9***Percentages of Ambition*

Ambition	<i>Time point 1</i>	<i>Time point 2</i>	<i>Time point 3</i>	<i>Overall Questionnaire</i>
Career soldier	53%	60%	64%	58%
Reserve	7%	9%	11%	9%
Civilian Employee	0%	1%	0%	1%
Doubting	36%	18%	11%	24%
Ambassador	0%	0%	3%	1%
No connection	4%	4%	0%	3%

**Effect of Expectations on Affective Commitment.** To calculate more explorative analyses, the dichotomous variable indicating the recruit's expectations ("Verwachtingen") was used as a predictor for the numerical variable containing the values of affective commitment. To control the impact of unmet expectations of the recruits on affective commitment, a two-sample Welsch t-test was performed. Moreover, a linear regression analysis was conducted to investigate the relationship between unmet expectations and affective commitment and quantify the effect of unmet expectations on affective commitment (Table 10). The model proved to be significant ( $F(1, 177) = 11.58, p = <.001$ ) and accounted for about 6% of the affective involvement variance. Meeting expectations significantly positively predicted affective involvement. Furthermore, a t-test demonstrated that affective commitment differed significantly between recruits whose expectations were met of their Dienjaar or those whose expectations were not met. This suggests that recruits with fulfilled expectations had greater affective commitment. Table 11 presents the means, standard errors, and how many participants' expectations were met related to affective commitment per time point.

**Table 10***Linear Regression Predictor Expectations Met on Affective Commitment (All Time Points)*

Predictor	<i>b</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Intercept	<b>3.25</b>	<b>0.06</b>	<b>51.42</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>
Expectations met	<b>0.30</b>	<b>0.09</b>	<b>3.47</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>

Note. italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

**Table 11***Descriptive Statistics of Expectations*

Expectations	<i>Mean Affective Commitment</i>	<i>SE Affective Commitment</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Time point 1				
Not Met	3.29	0.08	47	58%
Met	3.54	0.12	34	42%
Time point 2				
Not Met	3.37	0.12	26	39%
Met	3.58	0.16	36	54%
Time point 3				
Not Met	2.89	0.17	14	39%
Met	3.51	0.21	22	61%
All Questionnaires				
Not Met	3.25	0.06	87	47%
Met	3.55	0.09	92	50%

Note. italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

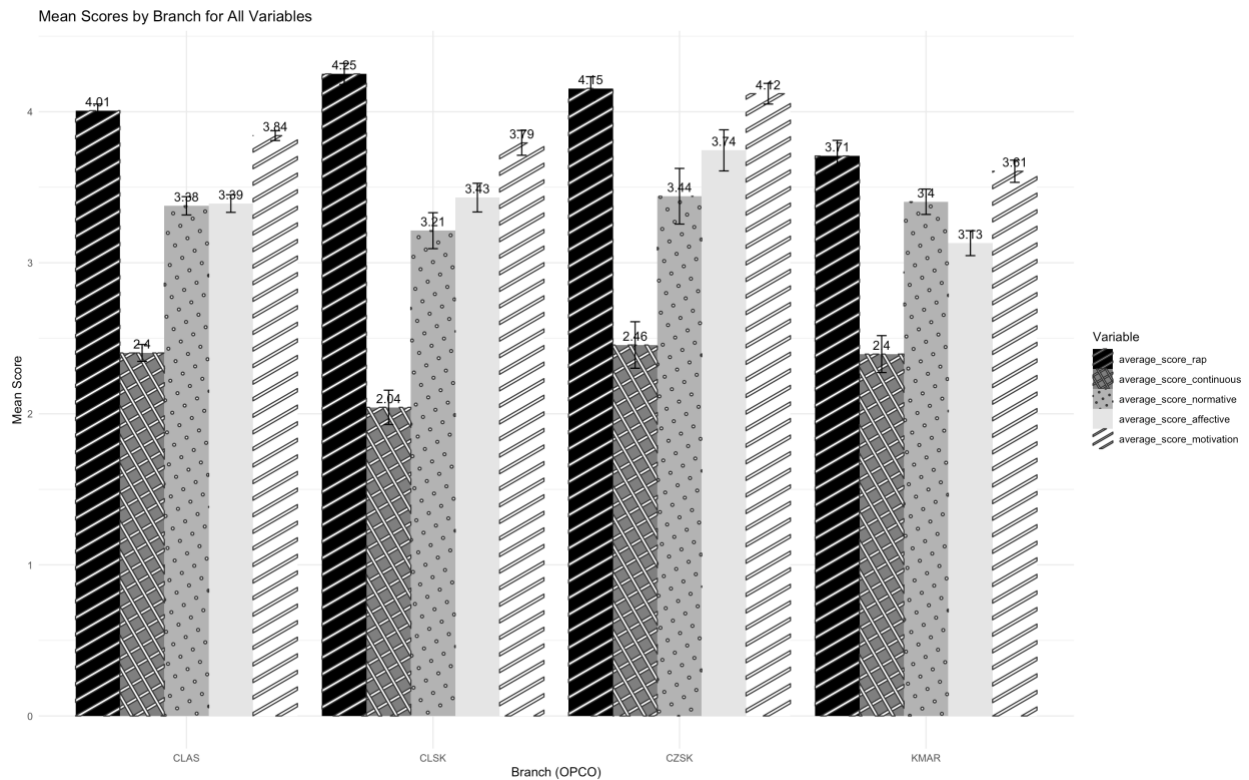
**ANOVAs on the Armed Forces Branches.** ANOVAs were performed to test the differences in *Motivation*, *Rapport*, *Continuous Commitment*, *Normative Commitment*, and *Affective Commitment* across the different armed forces branches (OPCO) (Table 12). Results indicated significant differences in *Motivation*, *Rapport*, and *Affective Commitment*. When performing Tukey's HSD test, it showed significant differences between the Military Police and the Army ( $p = .019$ ) and the Navy ( $p = .011$ ) experiencing the levels of rapport and motivation

during training. Furthermore, there were no significant differences found for *Continuous Commitment*, *Normative Commitment* as well as the third time point of measuring *Affective Commitment*.

Overall, throughout the whole Dienjaar, there appeared significant differences between the branches when testing for *Rapport*, *Affective Commitment*, and *Motivation*. Figure 4 shows the mean scores per branch, visualising the differences. Upon analysing Dienjaar over its trajectory, it seems that every military branch has distinct training programs and cultures within its various units causing a difference in the rapport between cadres and recruits, creating "green blood" and ultimately motivating the recruits to pursue careers in the armed forces.

**Figure 4**

*Mean Scores per Branch for All Variables*



**Table 12***ANOVAs Armed Forces Branches*

Variable	<i>DF</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
Time Point 1			
Rapport	3(180)	<b>4.54</b>	<b>.006</b>
Continuous Commitment	3(180)	2.45	.070
Normative Commitment	3(180)	0.90	.444
Affective Commitment	3(180)	<b>3.16</b>	<b>.029</b>
Motivation	3(180)	<b>5.64</b>	<b>.002</b>
Time Point 2			
Rapport	3(180)	2.37	.079
Continuous Commitment	3(180)	0.90	.446
Normative Commitment	3(180)	0.09	.967
Affective Commitment	3(180)	0.99	.405
Motivation	3(180)	1.65	.187
Time Point 3			
Rapport	3(180)	0.70	.558
Continuous Commitment	3(180)	0.29	.835
Normative Commitment	3(180)	0.41	.749
Affective Commitment	3(180)	0.94	.431
Motivation	3(180)	1.96	.140
Overall			
Rapport	3(180)	<b>6.19</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>
Continuous Commitment	3(180)	2.39	.070
Normative Commitment	3(180)	0.44	.726
Affective Commitment	3(180)	<b>4.23</b>	<b>.006</b>
Motivation	3(180)	<b>8.25</b>	<b>&lt;.001</b>

Note. italics for  $p < .05$ , bold for  $p < .01$ , and bold italics for  $p < .001$ .

## 3.2 Qualitative Results

The qualitative results were constructed from codes extracted from the open-ended responses of all questionnaires. In addition, over the past few months, numerous semi-structured interviews were conducted with participants. These interviews took place during scheduled and unscheduled work visits, where the information from the open-ended questions provided further depth. These qualitative results are compiled in the codes below (Table 13). Appendix D contains a more elaborate overview of all codes.

### *Working and Training Conditions*

Conditions during training or working at the operational unit play a crucial role not only in the recruits' learning process but also in the group-forming process. It supports the recruits when conditions are created to boost group cohesion, to let recruits feel less 'inferior' compared to the regular recruits. This is important, as one of the recruits said: "We only have had eight weeks of basic military training, not enough to be up for the job, and all the 'normal recruits' know our limitations."

Recruits need to experience a positive and (psychologically) safe environment, in which they get physically challenged, and to provide them with the opportunity for personal development. The working conditions need to be optimal, as it creates the recruit's working context in which they can develop themselves to get the best out of them during their year. Several recruits argued that they had expected heavier training and work conditions in which they would spend more time in the field therefore learning more operational (military) skills.

### *Communication*

It is rather challenging for a starting Dienjaar recruit to find the right information by themselves. There is a lack of central communication resources, therefore communication about career development also depends heavily on leadership: "Keep explaining new things, especially to Dienjaar people, because in terms of specific military organisational knowledge, we are still lagging compared to the rest." While some units put a lot of energy into obtaining and communicating information to their recruits, other units are less keen on this, resulting in differences in the information level of the various recruits. It remains important for them, as their

future also depends on it: “More clarity on advancement within the armed forces. Still, it is unclear what the process contains and which opportunities lie ahead after Dienjaar.” As Dienjaar draws to a close it becomes evident that the importance of communication decreases. Not because communication is less important, but because the recruits already collected their information to decide upon when finishing their Dienjaar.

### ***Expectations and Perspective***

One of the perspectives of Dienjaar involved recruits orienting themselves for a year within the armed forces. Moreover, after completing their Dienjaar, the organisational aim is that they will develop a career within the armed forces. Opportunities for this were communicated in the recruitment phase, which builds up expectations. Because this cohort has on average a high level of education, a reasonable proportion of recruits is expected to pursue a career reaching a higher rank when continuing to serve in the armed forces. Nevertheless, meeting the expectations and perspectives is important: “I eventually want to become an officer, but due to a lack of clarity, I am now continuing as a soldier first, hoping to become an officer later on.”

The recruit’s commanders and colleagues appeared to be their biggest source of information. However, these colleagues also lacked up-to-date and comprehensive knowledge on how to effectively engage motivated recruits in fitting procedures. Since the organisation wants to use Dienjaar as a recruitment tool for other categories (officers and non-commissioned officers) as well, the perspective for development within the armed forces should be clear: “[I would like] more clarity on moving on to, for example, the Royal Military Academy”. [Will I need to do] Initial Military training again or partially? And what if you don't go to the Royal Military Academy?”

### ***Professional Development***

Recruits, when asked why they should complete Dienjaar after completing initial military training, primarily focus on professional development and experience: “I expected to get a better picture of the armed forces and orient on the specific job I aimed for.” Many assumed that it was beneficial for their professional development when they met the stereotypical characteristics of the armed forces (tough and physically challenging). It was motivating when commanders actively allowed Dienjaar recruits to perform meaningful activities enabling them to acquire

relevant work experience. At the end of Dienjaar, multiple recruits did see the possibility of further developing themselves after Dienjaar: “[It’s motivation is...] To get a clear insight into ‘Marine life’ and to continue to grow in it, in case of a positive image.” Nevertheless, for some of the recruits, the lack of professional development was also a reason for Dienjaar recruits to quit after their Dienjaar: “We do not get opportunities to develop and promises have been broken.”

### ***Personal Development***

When starting military training and working within an operational unit, it is not only about developing professionally but also developing as a person. It is about learning to perform under aggravated conditions and occasionally extending your boundaries therefore developing themselves: “Making myself proud and showing family that I can do it after all” and “by improving myself, finding a future in the military.” A large part of Dienjaar recruits expected to develop personally as well. Providing the opportunity for recruits to benefit from personal development, has a motivating effect: “Improving my weak spots and strengthening my strong qualities [are the reason it motivates me]”. The development that Dienjaar recruits go through, gives them a sense of pride, which comes up frequently in the interviews. Challenges in the program's process expose the recruits to inconsistencies, leading to disappointments, nevertheless increasing their perseverance: “If I start something, I finish it.”

### ***Organisational Processes***

It is important to align all parties in the Dienjaar process to make sure there is a communication loop between the Dienjaar management and all instructors, managers, and commanders involved. This can affect people's commitment. Many recruits throughout the various branches of the armed forces indicate that having or fostering a good group spirit or investing in relationships has a motivating effect. However, there is also room for improvement as the recruits expressed that the Dienjaar management could be improved: “I like this organisation, but not Dienjaar”, “[I would like to see] that certain aspects are better organised, think about food costs, travel expenses reimbursement etc.” Despite being an innovative process, not all matters were handled well and not all preconditions were in place: “Communication could be better, especially regarding assignments. Sometimes there is disagreement between Alpha,

Bravo, and Charlie [coy] instructors. This sometimes causes miscommunication; however, these developmental problems come from novelty.”

**Table 13**

*Frequency Table Open Questions Coding All Questionnaires*

Code	Definition	% Q1	% Q2	% Q3
Working and Training conditions	Conditions during training or working at the operational unit that play a crucial role not only in the recruits' learning process but also in the group-forming process.	22%	33%	29%
Communication	The strategy to disseminate information to ensure that the recruits are sufficiently informed about all processes within and related to the Dienjaar. Based on this information, the recruits will be able to make decisions.	9%	9%	2%
Expectations and Perspective	Before the start of the Dienjaar, recruits received information on what to expect during the Dienjaar, as well as how to develop during and after completing their Dienjaar. These expectations and perspectives should be fulfilled and opportunities provided at the various time points of the Dienjaar.	12%	11%	12%
Professional Development	Gaining experiences that give the recruit an incentive for work-related developments that can be used in a future military career.	23%	18%	29%
Personal Development	Working within the armed forces also teaches personnel to work under pressure, to deal with setbacks, to adapt to a team, etc. This makes that an individual learns about themselves and personally develops.	15%	10%	13%

Code	Definition	Freq Q1	Freq Q2	Freq Q3
Organisational Processes	Processes within the organisation need to be aligned to ensure all information reaches people across the organisation. This enables recruits to make informed decisions, adjust their perspective or ask about issues unknown.	19%	20%	14%

#### 4. Discussion

The present mixed-methods study aimed to investigate rapport's influence on motivation and to identify continuous commitment, normative commitment and affective commitment as mediating factors. Therefore, this research was carried out, addressing the research question: *To what extent do rapport and commitment influence the motivation of Dienjaar (Service Year) recruits to continue their military service after finishing this specific gap year (Dienjaar)?* Results indicate that Dienjaar recruits rate their level of rapport, normative commitment, affective commitment and motivation as highly positive. It appeared that normative and affective commitment mediates the relationship between rapport and motivation at the beginning and halfway through Dienjaar. Instructors and commanders creating sufficient working and training conditions made the recruits not only learn their skills and drills but also supported circumstances to invest in socially cohesive processes which empowered the recruit's affective commitment.

In addition, recruits with fulfilled expectations had greater affective commitment, and affective commitment predicted whether recruits wanted to pursue their military career. Nevertheless, the mediating effect disappeared towards the end of the Dienjaar but it became clear how organisational processes, communication and information affect the perspective of personal and professional development of recruits, therefore keeping the motivation level high.

##### 4.1 Research Findings

The level of rapport is highly valued, meaning recruits perceive the connection between them and the instructor or commander as positive. This is also evident in the qualitative data, where recruits express the importance of the relationship with their instructor and commander

and the skills they learn from them. For instance, recruits revealed that when the commander holds personal conversations with them, it gives direct personal feedback and honours agreements, thereby increasing their motivation. When a commander takes this approach, he implicitly invests in intrinsic motivation, according to the self-determination theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000).

The predictive strength of normative and affective commitment implies that commitment due to norms and values as well as experiencing green blood flowing through your veins predict motivation. Investment in the Dienjaar should be related to keeping the level of this type of commitment high since feeling emotionally attached to the military influences motivation to continue developing a career within the armed forces. As Meyer and Allen (1991) argue, this can be done by continuing to invest in people's identification with the organisation and internalization of organisational values. Instructors and commanders contribute to this process. Because of the input the instructors and commanders give into the relationships between them and the recruits, individuals are influenced to meet the organisational values, work hard for their organisation, and decide to stay. From the standpoint of internalisation, employees commit to organisations that share their values. Moreover, they contribute to the success of these organisations because their behaviour aligns with their values (Meyer & Allen, 1991). As a result, it becomes a win-win situation for both.

Furthermore, recruits with high levels of affective commitment score high on motivation levels and moreover, affective commitment predicts recruits' ambition to become professional soldiers (or reservists). Consequently, investing in affective commitment pays off for retention. To illustrate, to fuel motivation, recruits emphasize the importance of a supportive and cohesive group environment, engaged instructors and supervisors, and perspectives on career advancement to sustain high levels of normative and affective commitment. According to the self-determination theory of Ryan and Deci (2000), fulfilling the need to build relationships and connect with your environment adds to an individual's motivation. This is supported by the recruits whose motivation seems to derive more from the quality of their interactions and getting attention from their commanders within the military setting.

Despite the high scores on these two types of commitment, the predictive strength of continuous commitment is low. This indicates that rapport does not impact extrinsic rewards related to continuous commitment such as salary or other job-related material aspects and

therefore does not influence motivation. As a result, the recruit's evaluation of cost-benefit analysis indicates that the perceived cost of leaving the organisation is low (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Aspects of this may be that recruits would not lose benefits such as health insurance since they do not get health insurance like professional recruits. In addition, there are no civilian training opportunities for the first two years as they must work within the armed forces for more than two years to get funding for civilian training. Therefore, there is no perceived loss related to education. Moreover, they know there are other career opportunities outside the military organisation for career development.

Nevertheless, since there are practical implications that seem to change the predictive strength of normative and affective commitment later in the Dienjaar trajectory, other factors influencing motivation also need to be taken into account. First, the qualitative data suggests that towards the end of the Dienjaar, the recruits determined whether or not the initial expectations had been fulfilled. It implied some violations of the recruit's psychological contract since expectations were not met. According to Rousseau (1989), a psychological contract can be defined as a mental contract that contains a person's expectations towards an organisation. When experiencing violations within the psychological contract, trust will decrease when dissatisfaction increases and the relationship may end when promises are broken (Rousseau, 1989). Trust is important in employment relationships and has a direct effect on accumulated affective commitment (Cook & Wall, 1980; Frazier et al., 2014). Consequently, commitment will be directly affected when trust is violated (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). When promises are broken and expectations are not met, the level of trust will decrease. However, trust in this context can be compared to rapport and can be defined as the essential stage in building assurance, faith and a relationship (Collins et al., 2005). Therefore, when commanders or instructors recalibrate the psychological contract with Dienjaar recruits, provide perspective, and restore trust, it will keep the recruit's motivation on a high level.

Secondly, the qualitative data also suggests that towards the end of Dienjaar getting the opportunity to develop professionally became important. Nevertheless, people need information on professional options and have this knowledge to base their decisions on. They need to trust the organisation that they will receive the opportunity to professionally develop, although it does not meet their perspective of becoming an officer or non-commissioned officer. When development was facilitated by their commanders, this could have become a factor boosting their

motivation. Despite the lack of prospects of getting a higher rank quickly, receiving information on how to continue working within the armed forces, and having the self-efficacy to complete the procedure -with help from their commanders- appears to be motivating.

Thirdly, it must be taken into account that there are differences within the armed forces branches and units in terms of rapport, affective commitment and motivation. Towards the end of the Dienjaar, this changed, and the differences between the armed forces branches disappeared. One explanation for this may be that there were branches that had the Dienjaar imposed, which made it an external motivator for commanders in those branches to implement the Dienjaar. In contrast, there were also commanders in the other branches who perceived this innovative project as an opportunity to briefly and quickly fill their vacancies with young enthusiastic people. The difference in motivation for commanders to make it a success may have had an effect and resulted in differences between armed forces branches. Furthermore, it was found that the difference occurred during their initial military training, assuming there are differences in military training. This could be due to culture or context (Monahan, 2023) such as being trained integrated with regular recruits or training in a dedicated Dienjaar training. Evidently, every training has its own culture and training courses differ in aspects such as duration and intensity, but for instructors, it is good to realise that the training process can affect the levels of rapport, affective commitment and motivation.

In addition, it is proposed that the perception of person-organization fit affects the continuation of employment (Jacoby, 2021). This is consistent with the outcomes of whether or not expectations were met and the degree of affective commitment, which has a direct impact on motivation and therefore attrition. These characteristics and the research findings emphasize the importance of providing young recruits with clear career development perspectives, timely information, and meetable expectations to maintain their motivation for retention, which is a goal of the organisation. Therefore, there needs to be awareness of generational differences, as this can cause conflict and influence how rapport is built, commitment is invested in, and people become motivated.

Since it was common for Gen Z recruits growing up to find or receive information quickly, it is therefore explainable that Dienjaar recruits mention the lack of information and communication so often. Nevertheless, their rapport levels, affective commitment, and motivation remained high during their Dienjaar. As a result, 64% of recruits want to proceed as

professional military and 11% aspire to become reservists at the end of Dienjaar. Crucial in this process is the role of the instructor or commander in making an effort to search for current information on the Dienjaar process. Making an effort to provide them with perspectives on professional and personal development, and sharing information on how to achieve these perspectives, had two side effects: it gave the recruit a sense of belonging, which resulted in building rapport, and it refined the recruit's expectations of the Dienjaar process.

## **4.2 Limitations**

From the start, cohort 2023 consisted of 130 recruits. During the year, this number decreased due to the cessation of their Dienjaar. Nevertheless, over 100 recruits remained. 81 recruits participated in the first questionnaire, but unfortunately, during the second questionnaire (67 participants), and the third questionnaire (36 participants), these numbers decreased. According to Pan and Zhan (2020), the dropout rate has the greatest impact on diagnostic accuracy and the least impact on overall proficiency. Nonetheless, a sufficient number of items is essential to offset the negative effects of the dropout rate. However, the attrition in this research affected the findings and can be considered a limitation.

Furthermore, this cohort is the first cohort and therefore the pilot of Dienjaar which can be considered another limitation. Being the pilot causes processes to be worked on for the first time and therefore sometimes fail or prove inefficient. Nevertheless, because being in the pilot, where a lot of things can go wrong, this also implies that the feedback is especially valuable. Therefore, this can be used to motivate the recruits to provide honest responses. Furthermore, as Dienjaar received a lot of attention from the start, recruits were frequently surveyed. Each week they were required to take questionnaires and assessments to produce data and provide answers to multiple researchers on the effectiveness of this particular year. This may explain why the number of participants decreased, resulting in a direct negative impact on this study.

Moreover, since they were the first group to start a Dienjaar, there is no comparison group or other benchmark to compare their results to. Furthermore, the distribution of recruits among the various branches of the armed forces was not uniform. To illustrate, there were 12 Navy recruits, 14 Air Force recruits, 11 Military Police recruits, and over 80 Army recruits. This can be seen as a source of systematic and uncontrolled variance power and therefore considered a limitation. Furthermore, when starting a pilot, an organisation always suffers from start-up issues. However,

it also attracts attention, which can also be considered positive but in this specific case can be an overkill. Therefore, the characteristics of being a pilot could have moderated the results and can be seen as a limitation.

### **4.3 Implications**

To gain perspective, but also for instructors to build rapport using correct information, communication is essential. Providing tailor-made information for all involved ensures everyone gets the right knowledge. This can help build rapport and thus be input for commitment and motivation of recruits (Shannon, 2018). Since perspective and development opportunities are also crucial for motivation, and to ensure that this information spreads through the organisation, developing a communication plan with communication strategies is essential (Torppa & Smith, 2011). This includes examining the effects of different communication modalities (such as digital platforms and face-to-face interactions) on recruits' understanding and motivation and creating training curricula that match the different characteristics and requirements of different generations. In doing so, future research can examine how well these initiatives promote cohesion, commitment and retention.

Furthermore, the function of psychological contracts in various stages of a recruit's career can be the subject of follow-up research. Retention strategies can benefit from an understanding of how unfulfilled expectations impact long-term commitment and how to manage these expectations (Torppa & Smith, 2011). Next, finding successful methods for fostering rapport between recruits and instructors can be another subject of research. Since affective commitment is the strongest commitment type (Matzler & Renzl, 2007), mediating the relationship between rapport and motivation, is important to strengthen. This entails investigating how affective commitment is fostered through mentoring, leadership principles, and interpersonal communication.

### **4.4 Conclusions**

Overall, it is demonstrated that the effect of rapport and affective commitment on motivation is profound. Whereas normative and affective commitment are mediating factors towards completion, nevertheless, the predicting effect disappears at the end. As a result, there appear to be other factors of influence that keep Dienjaar recruit's motivation high, like meeting

expectations and providing developmental options. In addition, it is important to mention that the instructors and commanders play a large role in the investment in motivation. They are the key players who must have the mindset of investing in their young recruits ensuring this project succeeds. It is they who make the difference for the recruit, who connect all information and provide recruits as well as other stakeholders with perspective. Ultimately doing this by guiding the recruits during their journey and building a high level of rapport, investing in affective commitment and influencing the recruits' motivation. In conclusion, when achieving this, most recruits are expected to continue working within the Dutch Ministry of Defence, thereby increasing the organisation's operational readiness, ultimately contributing to the three main tasks of the armed forces, and making it future-proof.

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## Appendix A Questionnaire Recruits Dienjaar

### Questionnaire IGK – Dienjaar

#### Demographics:

- Age / Year of Birth:
- Gender:
- Education:
- Educational direction:
- Previous experience within the defence organisation:
- Training platoon / Unit:
- Armed forces Branch:
- Weapon/Service Compartment:
- Regular Dienjaar or specialist Dienjaar:

#### Questions "Building rapport" (building report)

Source: Report Scales for Investigative Interviews and Interrogations 2 (RS3i) Interviewee Version (Duke et al., 2018)

(Likert scale 1-5 = 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Totally agree)

1. My instructor is honest with me.
2. My instructor is good at his/her job.
3. My instructor thinks my level of knowledge is important.
4. My instructor and I have the same background.
5. My instructor does his job well as a trainer within the Dienjaar.
6. I can trust my instructor on his/her word.
7. My instructor and I have a lot in common.
8. My instructor really listens to what I have to say.
9. I am motivated to perform well during my military training.
10. I can trust my instructor to keep his/her promise.
11. My instructor does his best to do a good job.
12. My instructor behaves like a professional.
13. My instructor cares about my opinion.

14. My instructor and I get along well.
15. My instructor and I work well together as a team within the Dienjaar.
16. My instructor and I were probably raised the same.
17. I want to do well during my Dienjaar training.
18. The instructor is looking after me.
19. It's easy to talk (communicate) between me and my instructor.
20. The instructor is interested in my opinion.
21. I really want to pass the instructor's assignment.

### **Commitment Questionnaire**

Source: Allen & Meyer (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance and normative commitment to the organization. *Journal of Occupational Psychology*.

(Likert scale 1-5 = 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Totally agree)

22. I experience problems in this organization as private problems.
23. It would be hard for me to leave the Dienjaar at this point, even if I wanted to
24. The Dienjaar means a lot to me
25. I grew up thinking that there was value in staying loyal to an organization
26. I feel like I have few alternatives to quitting my job now
27. I feel emotionally attached to the Dienjaar
28. If I resign, it will be difficult to find another job
29. It is improper to switch (prematurely) from one organization to another
30. I feel at home in this organization
31. Too much in my life would be disrupted if I resign now
32. I feel like 'part of the family' in this organization
33. It would be a good thing if employees stayed with an organization for most of their careers
34. I'm afraid of what might happen if I quit the Dienjaar without immediately having a new job
35. I believe that a person should be loyal to his or her organization
36. I like to talk about the Dienjaar and the organization with people from outside this organization

37. One of the reasons I'm staying with this organization is that loyalty is important to me
38. I will continue to work for this organization because it is necessary for certain reasons, not because I want it so badly
39. I would like to continue working in this organization for the rest of my career
40. If I received an offer for another job, I would feel burdened to leave this organization
41. I think people nowadays switch from one organization to another too often
42. I don't think I could attach myself to any other organization as easily as I would to this one
43. One of the reasons I continue to work here is that another organization may offer me less.
44. In this day and age, it is wise for employees to feel connected to their organization

### **Intrinsic Motivation Questionnaire**

Source: AMS-R = revised 10-item version of AMS (Lang & Fries, 2006)

*Motivation can be an indication of how far someone like you will complete the Serving Year's course. To determine how your motivation is affected, the following 16 questions are about exactly that. How motivated are you at the moment in your Dienjaar training?*

(Likert scale 1-5 = 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Totally agree)

45. I like situations where I can see what I can do.
46. When I have a problem and know I can solve it, I want to do it immediately.
47. I like it when I can use my skills (e.g. skills and drills).
48. I get excited about assignments that put me to the test.
49. I get excited about demanding situations.
50. I'm afraid I'm not doing something right when the pressure is on.
51. I don't feel good when I have to do something where I'm not sure I'm doing it right.
52. I prefer not to do assignments that I think I can't pass, even if no one sees it.
53. I'm scared when I have to do new things, even if no one sees it.
54. I feel bad when I don't understand a problem right away.

### **Additional Motivation Questionnaire**

(Likert scale 1-5 = 1. Strongly disagree 2. Disagree 3. Neutral 4. Agree 5. Totally agree)

55. The instructor contributes to my motivation to complete my training within the Serving Year.

56. I am motivated to complete the training of the Dienjaar.

57. I know what I need to stay motivated.

58. I want to do my best for a good final assessment.

59. The training encourages me to get the best out of myself.

60. The training is a positive experience.

61. If you have to decide now, when finishing your Dienjaar, how do you want to stay connected to the armed forces? Answer options: 1) professional soldier, 2) reserve soldier, 3) civil employee, 4) As an ambassador, 5) I have not decided yet, 6) I don't want to stay connected

### **Open-ended Questions Questionnaire 1**

*To avoid the feeling that you have not been able to say the most important thing, in the context of the closed questions asked, we invite you to answer the open questions below.*

62. What improvements within the group can increase your motivation?

63. What improvements between you and the instructor can increase your motivation?

64. What do you think are the reasons for people to quit the Dienjaar?

65. What is the reason for you to finish the Dienjaar?

66. Did the expectations you had for the Dienjaar come true? If not, would you please explain?

### **Open-ended Questions Questionnaire 2**

*To avoid the feeling that you have not been able to say the most important thing, in the context of the closed questions asked, we invite you to answer the open questions below.*

1. What improvements within the group can increase your motivation?

2. What improvements between you and your commander can increase your motivation?

3. What improvements between you and your colleagues can increase your motivation?

4. What improvements within the Dienjaar organisation can increase your motivation?

5. What is the reason for you to finish the Dienjaar?

6. What expectations did you have before starting the Dienjaar?
7. Did the expectations you had for the Dienjaar come true? If not, would you please explain?

### **Open-ended Questions Questionnaire 3**

1. Did your motivation increase or decrease during Dienjaar and what is the reason for this?
2. What is the reason for you to finish the Dienjaar?
3. What expectations did you have before starting the Dienjaar?
4. Did the expectations you had for the Dienjaar come true? If not, would you please explain?

## Appendix B Interim Reports

Figure 5

### First General Interim Feedback







Ministerie van Defensie

INTERN BERAAD

Staatssecretaris van Defensie  
MPC 58B  
Postbus 20701  
2500 ES DEN HAAG

**BOEs**  
Inspecteur-Generaal der  
Krijgsmacht  
  
**Locatie**  
Landgoed "De Zwaluwenberg"  
Utrechtseweg 225  
1213 TR Hilversum  
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**Steller**  
mr. M.C.E. Telkamp-Spruit  
Stafofficier Onderzoek IGK

**Datum**  
25 maart 2024

**Onze referentie**  
BS2024010364

**I.a.a.**  
SG  
CDS  
DAOG/SC PG  
DPOD

*Bij beantwoording, datum,  
onze referentie en onderwerp  
vermelden.*

## nota

Tussentijdse nota IGK Dienjaar

*Beste Christyphie,*

### Inleiding

Momenteel loopt mijn onderzoek naar de ontwikkeling van het Dienjaar en de eerste stappen die vanaf 2023 worden gezet. Mijn eerste beeld is dat het zeker niet ontbreekt aan animo. Er is veel interesse in het Dienjaar. Des te meer reden om te volgen of de defensieorganisatie deze aanwas kan absorberen. Vooruitlopend op de publicatie van het totaal rapport aan het einde van dit jaar, rapporteer ik nu reeds enkele bevindingen aan u die niet kunnen wachten tot het eindresultaat beschikbaar is.

### Bevindingen

Op hoofdlijnen de volgende twee bevindingen die voor nu van belang zijn:

1. Het Dienjaar loopt en blijft lopen door de *can do*-mentaliteit.
2. Het Dienjaar heeft nog niet geleid tot een significante stijging van de personele gereedheid.

De organisatie was nog niet voldoende klaar voor het opnemen van de eerste lichte Dienjaarmilitairen. Dit geldt onder andere voor de randvoorwaardelijke aspecten zoals infrastructuur, uitrusting, wapens en munitie, maar ook duidelijkheid over de rechtspositie en de mogelijkheden voor doorstroom na het Dienjaar. Dat het Dienjaar doorgang vindt op dit moment, komt voornamelijk door de *can do*-mentaliteit van de werkvloer in combinatie met het nu nog beperkte aantal deelnemers.

Op 6 februari jl. is vanuit de Tweede Kamer een motie ingediend om zo snel mogelijke fors op te schalen naar ten minste 4.000 Dienjaarmilitairen per jaar. Om hier invulling aan te kunnen geven, zullen eerst de genoemde randvoorwaarden structureel ingevuld moeten worden. Opschaling voor die tijd is niet verstandig en vormt eerder een risico voor het dienjaar in de toekomst.

### Onderzoek Dienjaar

Sinds september 2023 haalt mijn onderzoeksteam data op via vragenlijsten en interviews. Het onderzoeksteam bevroeg de Dienjaarmilitairen na afronding van hun initiële opleiding en halverwege hun Dienjaar. Tevens bevroeg het onderzoeksteam de instructeurs, leidinggevend en collega's over hun ervaringen met het Dienjaar en de Dienjaardeelnemers. Om meer duiding te geven aan de opgehaalde data legde het team werkbezoeken af aan onder andere DHC, EMMV CZSK, B&TCo, 11LMB, DGLC, 13LtBrig en KMS School Midden. Vooraf is ook gesproken met de initiator van het Dienjaar KLTZ Noordam en hij wordt gedurende het onderzoek op de hoogte gehouden. In de geanalyseerde resultaten vielen mij de onderstaande vier punten op.

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**1. Absorptievermogen organisatie**

Vanwege het beperkte aantal deelnemers per eenheid en de *can do*-mentaliteit van de werkvloer lukt het nu om de Dienjaarmilitairen te huisvesten, uit te rusten, een persoonlijk wapen te geven en van werk te voorzien. Zo werden bij een eenheid de persoonlijke wapens van de vacatures in de eenheid uitgeleend aan de acht Dienjaarmilitairen. Dit laatste zal niet meer mogelijk zijn als het aantal Dienjaarmilitairen met een factor tien of meer wordt verhoogd. Daarnaast zijn de processen voor de toewijzing van munitie momenteel zo ingeregeld dat op korte termijn geen grote hoeveelheid extra munitie aangevraagd kan worden. De eenheden zelf zitten al dusdanig krap in hun toewijzing dat herverdeling binnen de eenheid geen oplossing biedt. Veiligheidsschoenen zijn niet opgenomen in het uitrustingspakket voor de deelnemers aan het dienstjaar en dit kan volgens de leidinggevenden logischerwijs tot onveilige situaties leiden tijdens zowel de opleiding als op de werkplek.

**2. Communicatie**

Ondanks dat het merendeel van de leidinggevenden aangeeft op de hoogte te zijn van het doel van het Dienstjaar, blijkt ook dat het merendeel van deze groep respondenten aangeeft dat zij door hun eigen lijn niet voldoende worden geïnformeerd over het Dienstjaar. De intentie is niet duidelijk genoeg en zij hebben vragen over doorstroombmogelijkheden. Veel p-gerelateerde processen zijn nog onduidelijk voor hen maar leidt wel tot vragen vanuit de deelnemers. Dit geldt met name bij het CLAS waar het grootste deel van de Dienjaarmilitairen - verspreid over meerdere eenheden - werkzaam is. Zelf geven de Dienjaarmilitairen aan dat hun motivatie zou stijgen bij een betere communicatie en meer duidelijkheid. Veel van hun vragen kunnen namelijk nu (nog) niet beantwoord worden door de militairen in hun directe omgeving.

**3. Doorstroom**

Dienjaarmilitairen missen duidelijkheid en perspectief over de mogelijkheden tot doorstroom. Ook hun leidinggevenden ontberen kennis over het doorstroomproces. Vanuit de Dienstjaarorganisatie is een algemeen schrijven gekomen, waaraan elk OPCO een eigen invulling kan geven. Zo bracht het CLAS op 29 februari 2024 een memo uit over doorstroombmogelijkheden en doorstroomprocedures. Ik vraag mij af of deze doorstroombmogelijkheden voldoen aan het beeld dat aan de Dienjaarmilitairen aan de voorkant is geschetst. Opvallend is dat nagenoeg alle leidinggevenden aangeven dat zij zelf advies zouden willen geven over de verdere loopbaan van hun Dienjaarmilitairen. Hieruit blijkt de behoefte tot inspraak maar ook betrokkenheid en de wil om mee te denken.

De huidige opleidingssystematiek biedt op dit moment niet de mogelijkheid om Dienjaarmilitairen na hun Dienstjaar eenvoudig door te laten stromen naar de organisatie, aangezien de opleidingsplaatsen voor onderofficier of officier van september 2024 reeds zijn gevuld. Dienjaarmilitairen die door willen stromen als onderofficier of officier zullen moeten wachten tot er weer opleidingsplaatsen beschikbaar zijn. Het is voor mij nog de vraag hoe de periode tussen einde Dienstjaar en de vervolgopleiding overbrugd gaat worden. De opleidings-systematiek voor alle OPCO's dient nog passend te worden gemaakt voor het Dienstjaar. Indien de Dienjaarmilitair zijn carrière vervolg wil geven als manschap, is het van belang dat hij, indien noodzakelijk, na het Dienstjaar toegang krijgt tot aanvullende functieopleidingen.

Mocht de Dienjaarmilitair na zijn Dienstjaar besluiten om de organisatie te verlaten, moet het ook duidelijk zijn of hij automatisch kan doorstromen als

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reservist of dat hij bijvoorbeeld na het afronden van een studie terug kan keren bij onze organisatie. Duidelijkheid over de vervolgmogelijkheden dient echter snel te komen, aangezien de inschrijfdatum voor vervolopleiding aan het MBO op 1 april eindigt en die voor het HBO en WO op 1 mei. Immers, als dit niet lukt, loopt de organisatie achter de feiten aan en maken de Dienjaarmilitairen mogelijk andere keuzes dan voor Defensie.

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#### 4. **Personele gereedheid**

Driekwart van de leidinggevendenden geeft aan dat Dienjaarmilitairen over het algemeen een gemotiveerde indruk maken en dat is een positief signaal. Echter geeft meer dan de helft van de leidinggevendenden ook aan dat het Dienjaar in de huidige opzet nog niet bijdraagt aan het verhogen van de personele gereedheid. Dienjaarmilitairen verlagen de werklust niet, maar verhogen die juist. Zo wordt een ruime meerderheid van de Dienjaarmilitairen boven de reguliere formatie ingezet en heeft bijvoorbeeld CLSK bij de operationele eenheden geen functies voor manschappen, maar kunnen zij de Dienjaarmilitairen wel als extra handjes goed gebruiken. Voorts geven met name CLAS en KMar aan dat de Dienjaarmilitairen onvoldoende zijn opgeleid om hun functie uit te oefenen. Hoewel Dienjaar een mooi initiatief is, voldoet het op dit moment niet aan de ambitie om de personele gereedheid te versterken.

Sommige eenheden zien het Dienjaar als een wervingstool (binden & boeien) dat op termijn kan leiden tot het verminderen van het personeelstekort. Ongeveer de helft van alle leidinggevende vraagt zich af of de duur van het Dienjaar niet te kort is en of de Dienjaarmilitairen wel effectief worden ingezet. Bij een aantal eenheden van CLAS moet bijvoorbeeld de instroom van de Dienjaarmilitairen passen bij de opwerkingsritmiek van de eenheid. Leidinggevendenden pleiten ook voor een beter *matching* van de Dienjaarmilitairen, zodat ze op hun niveau (en met hun interesses) van toegevoegde waarde kunnen zijn.

#### **Vooruitkijken**

Uit de data zoals tot op heden verkregen tijdens het onderzoek, blijkt dat de Dienjaarmilitairen gemotiveerd zijn vanwege de mogelijkheid tot carrièreopbouw, persoonlijke ontwikkeling, toenemend doorzettingsvermogen en het opdoen van ervaring binnen Defensie. Deze ambitie conflicteert niet met de doelstellingen van het Dienjaar, namelijk direct bijdragen aan de personele gereedheid. Het is echter van cruciaal belang perspectief te bieden aan de Dienjaarmilitairen en duidelijkheid voor de werkvloer waar de Dienjaarmilitairen worden opgeleid en aan het werk zijn.

Mijn resterende tijd voor het onderzoek dit jaar zal ik gebruiken om te onderzoeken of de ambitie van Defensie gerealiseerd kan worden binnen de staande organisatie. Daarbij houd ik in gedachten de wens om op te schalen naar tenminste 4.000 Dienjaarmilitairen per jaar. Ik wil mij richten op de vraag wat hier in mijn optiek voor nodig is.

#### **Afsluitend**

Met deze nota heb ik u een overzicht gegeven van de belangrijkste bevindingen uit de eerste helft van het Dienjaaronderzoek. De motivatie van de deelnemers en de wil van de organisatie is er. Belangrijk is om duidelijkheid te scheppen binnen en buiten de organisatie wat de bedoeling is van het Dienjaar en hoe daar invulling aan gegeven wordt. Vooral de relatie tot het versterken van de personele gereedheid moet duidelijk zijn. Het Dienjaar is een goed voorbeeld van een start maken met een plan wat parallel wordt doorontwikkeld op basis van ervaringen. Het is een gegeven dat niet iedereen daar even goed mee kan omgaan. Het maakt nog maar eens duidelijk dat een goede communicatie essentieel is bij een nieuw initiatief. Dat

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geldt ook voor het doorstroomproces waar de OPCO's een rol spelen.

In uw agenda is op 04 april a.s. tijd gereserveerd om te spreken over reservisten. Mogelijk biedt dat moment ook gelegenheid voor een toelichting mijnerzijds op deze nota.

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Inspecteur-Generaal der Krijgsmacht

F.V. van Sprang

Luitenant-generaal der mariniers

## Appendix C Semi-Structured Interview Questions

*Aan de hand van de onderstaande subvragen is het de bedoeling dat aan het eind van het interview de onderstaande 3 kernvragen beantwoord kunnen worden.*

### **Kernvragen:**

- Wat is je eerste indruk tot nu toe?
- Welke ambitie heb je na het dienstjaar?
- Faciliteert de organisatie dit/ krijg je medewerking vanuit je kader/leidinggevende

### **Subvragen:**

#### *Algemene indruk*

1. Wat is je eerste indruk tot nu toe?
2. Wat was de reden om je aan te melden voor het dienstjaar?
3. Welke verwachtingen had je van het dienstjaar?
4. Zijn je verwachtingen van het Dienstjaar waargemaakt, waarom wel/niet?
5. Is de functie binnen het DHC zoals je die van tevoren had voorgesteld? Waarom wel of niet

#### *Ambitie na het dienstjaar*

6. Op welke manier zou je na het dienstjaar verbonden willen blijven?

#### Doorgaan binnen defensie

7. Heb je al stappen gezet voor je eventuele vervolg binnen defensie? Zo ja, lukt dit of loop je ergens tegen aan?
8. Hoe is de begeleiding van je Kader/leidinggevende in de hulp voor je vervolgstappen?

#### Niet doorgaan binnen defensie

9. Wat zijn voor jou redenen om niet te willen blijven bij defensie?

#### *Motivatie*

10. Wat is voor jou de motivatie om het Dienjaar af te maken?  
-> Doorvragen op het belang van CC,NC, AC
11. Zijn er mensen gestopt uit jouw groep? Zo ja, wat zijn volgens jou de redenen waarom diegene is gestopt?
12. Welke verbeteringen in de groep kunnen er voor zorgen dat jouw motivatie stijgt?
13. Welke verbeteringen tussen jou en de instructeur kunnen ervoor zorgen dat de motivatie stijgt?
14. Zijn er overige verbetering die er voor jou voor zouden zorgen dat de motivatie stijgt?

### *Opleiding*

15. Wat waren je verwachtingen van de AMO?
16. Zijn deze verwachtingen waargemaakt?
17. Binnen het CLAS is de AMO separaat van de initiële opleiding. Bij jullie is die geïntegreerd met andere collega's die de opleiding binnen het KSML volgen. Hoe is dit bevallen en wat zouden jullie prefereren?
18. Hoe is de functie specifieke opleiding verlopen binnen het squadron?

### *Randvoorwaarden*

19. Hoe zit het met de materialen die jullie moeten krijgen, is daarvoor alles binnen of missen jullie iets (Bij onduidelijkheid evt. hint op: werktelefoon, kleding etc.)?
20. Hoe dienen jullie nu verlof/reiskosten in en krijgen jullie deze kosten ook altijd terug?
21. Zijn er andere randvoorwaarden die voor jullie onduidelijk zijn/ waar jullie vragen over hebben? (bij onduidelijkheid evt. hint op: salaris, verzekering)

### *Informatiestroom*

22. Waar zoeken jullie je informatie op wanneer je vragen hebt over het dienjaar?
23. Hebben jullie het idee dat jullie kader jullie vragen goed kan beantwoorden?
24. Wat hebben jullie nodig om voorzien te zijn van informatie?

## Appendix D Overview Codes Qualitative Data

**Table 14**

*Frequency Table Codes and Subcodes*

Nr	Code	Frequency Q1	Frequency Q2	Frequency Q3
<b>Working and Training conditions</b>				
2	<i>Positive working conditions between group members or organisation</i>	47	57	24
11	<i>Quality of training</i>	60	38	29
14	<i>Provided professional circumstances</i>	14	36	18
	<b>Total</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Communication</b>				
5	<i>Clarity</i>	26	15	4
3	<i>Need of more information</i>	21	20	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>47</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Expectations and Perspective</b>				
4	<i>Need for perspective to develop after finishing Dienjaar (doorstroom)</i>	30	15	11
17	<i>Promises</i>	38	10	10
19	<i>Expected perceptions on equality</i>		19	7
	<b>Total</b>	<b>68</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Professional Development</b>				
7	<i>Career building</i>	51	30	40
10	<i>Orientation at the Ministry of Defence</i>	24	32	19
18	<i>Group development</i>	8		1
9	<i>Gaining experience</i>	42	11	11
	<b>Total</b>	<b>125</b>	<b>73</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Personal Development</b>				
8	<i>Persevere</i>	9	15	11
6	<i>Personal development</i>	76	24	21
	<b>Total</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>32</b>

Nr	Code	Frequency Q1	Frequency Q2	Frequency Q3
	<b>Organisational Processes</b>			
12	<i>Group environment</i>	11	20	20
13	<i>Being challenged</i>	69	26	11
15	<i>Invest in group cohesion</i>	14	27	0
1	<i>Lack of personal attention</i>	11	8	3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>34</b>

## **Appendix E. AI Statement**

During the preparation of this work, I used ChatGPT to check the codes on bugs I created for RStudio. Furthermore, I used Scribbr to generate references and create a reference list. Furthermore, I used Scribbr to provide suggestions to break down long sentences. After using these tools/services, I thoroughly reviewed and edited the content as needed, taking full responsibility for the final outcome.