

Recruiting Research in the U.S. Army and Navy

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The work to be reported on stems from two research programs on military recruiting, one with the U.S. Army Research Institute and the other with the Navy Personnel Research, Studies and Technology Group. As part of the Army program, we will first describe development of an in-basket to evaluate planning and time management skills among students at the Recruiting and Retention School (RRS). Second, we discuss work done to develop a situational judgement test (SJT) as a training tool for the RRS. Regarding the Navy program, we first describe job analyses conducted to identify the important performance requirements for the field recruiter and recruiter-in-charge (RINC) jobs, and second, discuss research on a selection battery designed to identify non-commissioned officers (NCOs) with good potential for recruiting duty. Finally, we will outline plans to implement these research products.

In-Basket Development

The in-basket assessment exercise typically consists of a series of memos, messages, and other material related to the target job. The task of the assessee is to read and evaluate all of this information and then respond to each item in terms of what he or she would do relative to each situation. The in-basket generally targets practical judgment, problem solving, and related skills.

The in-basket we developed for the U.S. Army's RRS consists of 20 interrelated items focused on evaluating planning and time management skills. An example problem presented consists of three messages related to a high school student who was rejected from joining the service because he was overweight. He is criticizing the Army to his friends who *have* qualified for enlistment. Another problem relates to the possible arrest of an applicant who is otherwise well qualified for the service. The assessee is given a map of the recruiting area and asked to develop a plan for dealing with each of the problems. An example item appears in Figure 1.

INTRA-OFFICE MEMORANDUM

TO: SSG Siebert

FROM: SSG Stevens

I heard some information about Sydney Dobbins that you probably want to look into. While at the Citrus Park High School soccer game yesterday, I overheard some of Sydney's friends talking about how Sydney spent a night in the Citrus Park jail a couple days ago. I'm not sure what happened, but I thought you should know about it....especially since you conducted his police check last week...before any of this happened.

Figure 1. In-Basket Example

The RRS students complete the in-basket and then evaluate their own performance using a guidance package we developed. After their self-assessment, an instructor debriefs the students, describing effective and ineffective ways to deal with these kinds of issues and problems when they actually face them in the field. A debrief package for the instructor provides structure for this learning experience, but also allows for personal input based on the instructor's own recruiting experience.

SJT Development

A situational judgement test (SJT) generally presents in a paper-and-pencil format a series of difficult but realistic situations that might be encountered on the job. It is usually a multiple choice test, in that there are 3-5 response options presented for each situation, and the test-taker is asked to pick which is the most effective way to deal with the situation (and sometimes which is the *least* effective response). The test can be scored comparing the test takers responses to the opinions of an expert group regarding the relative effectiveness of each of the response options.

In developing our SJT for the Army's RRS, we first had 35 experienced field recruiters generate a total of more than 200 realistic, challenging recruiting situations. We then had another group of 60 recruiters with varying levels of experience record on a form what they would do in each situation. This resulted in about 8-12 responses for each of the 200+ situations. After eliminating 65 situations because of redundancy, difficulty in understanding, etc., our staff had approximately 45 recruiters, nominated as highly proficient, rate the effectiveness of each response option using a 7-point scale. A second "novice" group that knew very little about recruiting (40 basic trainees) also provided effectiveness ratings on the scale.

Our rationale here was to select for the final test, items (i.e., situations) that show relatively good agreement among the experts in relation to the effectiveness of each response, *but* demonstrate less agreement in the effectiveness ratings for the novice group. For such items, expert opinion is relatively uniform, but the best answers are not obvious in that the novice group does *not* agree as closely on the effectiveness of the responses. An example of a "good" item is shown in Figure 2. The final tests contains 25 items.

29. You have some paperwork that you need to fill out by the end of the day and your Station Commander asks you to assist another recruiter with a presentation to a local school. What should you do?				
Expert		Novice		
Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Response
4.43	1.44	3.67	1.62	a. Ask the Station Commander to help you with the paperwork or find out if someone else can do the school presentation.
2.26	1.54	4.41	2.15	b. Take the paperwork with you to the presentation and complete it there.
3.96	1.15	3.19	1.49	c. Assist the recruiter with the presentation and ask the Station Commander to complete the paperwork.
6.26	1.05	5.74	1.95	d. Let the Station Commander know that your paperwork will not be finished if you leave to help the other recruiter. If this is not a problem then help your coworker with the presentation.

Figure 2. SJT Example Item

The SJT will be used in the RRS to provide students with feedback on how to handle difficult situations in the recruiting environment. Instructors will administer the test and then review with students the effectiveness of each of the responses and, most importantly, *why* some of the response options are better than others.

Behavioral Job Analysis

Our staff worked with instructors and recruiter supervisors attending classes at the Navy Orientation Recruiting Unit (NORU) to develop behavior-based rating scales describing the important performance requirements for the field recruiter and recruiter-in-charge (RINC) jobs. For the recruiter job analysis, we used as a starting point behavior-based rating scales developed for the job in the 1970s (Borman, Hough, & Dunnette, 1976). Instructors and RINCs attending a NORU course were asked, in a workshop setting, to examine the eight performance categories and the behavioral definitions of four different levels of effectiveness for each category. The 24 workshop participants felt that the categories were still relevant, but made several revisions to the behavioral definitions based on changes that had occurred, especially in technology, and recruiting strategies and procedures. The eight performance categories are: (1) Locating And Contacting Qualified Prospects; (2) Gaining And Maintaining Rapport; (3) Obtaining Information From Prospects And Making Good Person-Navy Fits; (4) Salesmanship Skills; (5) Establishing And Maintaining Good Relationships In The Community; (6) Providing Knowledgeable And Accurate Information About The Navy; (7) Administrative Skills; (8) Supporting Other Recruiters And The Command.

The 32 behavioral statements (eight categories times four effectiveness levels) were then revised, and another group of RINCs (N = 20) “retranslated” the revised statements back into the categories and effectiveness levels to ensure that the behavioral definitions were clear. Results of the retranslation showed excellent agreement, 87.8% of the time behavioral statements reflected the intended categories and effectiveness levels.

For the RINC job analysis, our staff first interviewed 25 RINCs and Zone Supervisors to identify the central performance categories for the RINC job. These interviews resulted in a performance “model” with five categories, three relevant to the recruiting role important for success as a RINC and two relevant to the leader role also critical for success in this job. The model categories (*Recruiting Role*): (1) Sales Skills; (2) Human Relations Skills; (3) Self-Organization Skills; (*Leader Role*) (4) Supervising/Coordinating Skills; (5) Coaching/Training Developing Skills.

We then had 23 additional RINCs and Zone Supervisors generate specific examples of effective, mid-range, and ineffective RINC performance toward the model’s categories. These 189 performance examples were in turn retranslated, that is, sorted into one of the five categories and rated on effectiveness, by 19 RINCs and Zone Supervisors. The retranslated examples were subsequently used to write the behavioral statements defining four levels of effectiveness for each category. Finally, the 20 statements (five categories times four levels of effectiveness) were retranslated by 18 additional RINCs/Zone Supervisors, and in 79.5% of the cases the retranslation was into the intended category and effectiveness level. In 3-4 cases, there was a moderate amount of disagreement on the effectiveness levels, and revisions to the statements were made.

The Selection Test Battery

In the 1970s, we developed a recruiter selection test battery consisting primarily of personality and vocational interest items. As part of the test validation research done on the battery, we identified items that showed at least modest validity against job performance ratings, and factor analyzed the intercorrelations between those items. The factor analysis results were for the most part interpretable, and item composites of the factors were cross-validated with a second sample of Navy recruiters (Borman, Rosse, & Abrahams, 1980). Tables 1 and 2 present the factor composite names and cross-validities for, respectively, the personality and vocational interest constructs. These item composites will be part of a test battery that will be used in test validation research with Navy recruiters later this year.

Table 1
Selection Battery: Personality Constructs

Construct	1980 Validities
Leading and “Showing Off”	.27
Spontaneity	.22
Working Hard	.29
Admitting Unhappiness	-.17
Leading and Influence	.33

Table 2
Selection Battery: Vocational Interest Constructs

Construct	1980 Validities
Extraverted Interests	.22-.24
Sports Interests	.22
Interests in Law & Politics	.14-.15
Interests in Newspaper Work	.14

Intentions for Operational Use

Our goal is to implement the in-basket and SJT at the Army's RRS for use in training prospective recruiters. The recruiter and RINC behavior-based rating scales will each form the core of a feedback and coaching system that supervisors can use to help develop, especially, new recruiters or RINCs. Supervisors can use the scales to diagnose strengths and weaknesses in job performance and provide feedback to help improve performance. Finally, the intention with the validated test battery is to administer it routinely to Navy NCOs upon their first re-enlistment to provide an indicator of potential for success as a recruiter. NCOs with high potential based on test scores can be encouraged to volunteer for recruiting duty.

References

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