

TRANSCRIPT OF PRESENTATION

Title:

Military Psychology: Applications to Recruitment in the Singapore Armed Forces

Presenter:

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Transcript: (Slide 1-2)

This presentation is split into 4 portions. It will first give a quick overview of the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF) and some of the recruitment challenges that it faces. It will next present how military psychologists are employed in the SAF. Finally, a brief overview will be given of some of the projects on recruitment that the SAF military psychologists have undertaken.

Overview of the SAF (Slide 3-4)

The SAF is made up of regular (professional) soldiers, conscripts and a reserve component. Males aged 18 to 21 are required by law to undergo 2 to 21/2 years of compulsory full-time national service – during this period, they are called the National Service Force (NSF). Upon completing this compulsory national service, they transit into reserve, and are liable for national service call-up duty until a maximum age of 55 years old. During this time, they are called Operationally Ready National Servicemen, or NSmen for short.

The regular component of the SAF is divided into 3 main corp – the officers, the WOSE, and the DXO, which is a non-uniformed corp. Amongst these 3 corps, there are about 6 schemes of employment contracts.

Recruitment Challenges (Slide 5-12)

Slide 5 depicts the main recruitment paths for the SAF. The next few paragraphs will elaborate on some of the problems faced specific to these groups.

For talents, the pool available is getting smaller with increasing competition from the private sector. For the rank and file, the recruitment rate is not fast enough for some vocations. In both cases, there is a decreasing interest in a military career. (Slide 7)

The job scope of the regular military personnel is also getting increasingly more complicated and technologically inclined, thereby making the pool of those eligible smaller. In addition, a military career is no longer seen as a lifelong employment, which decreases its attractiveness for some. This decrease in attractiveness is also attributed to the rising expectations of those interested. (Slide 8)

For the DXO/civilian, there was previously a huge problem of them being perceived as second class citizens, which makes recruitment difficult. Also, the nature of their jobs is less specialized, which means that these people have higher job mobility. This in turn means that turnover is higher, which places different demands on the recruitment of these people. (Slide 9)

NSFs form the main recruitment pool of regulars. Many demographic factors influence their interest and eligibility for a military career, including rising education levels, greater urbanization, and shrinking birth rates. (Slide 10)

There were also concerns that the impact of national service would have an impact on the recruitment of personnel via the direct recruitment route. (Slide 11)

Introduction to Field Psychology (Slides 13-20)

The concept of field psychology for the Singapore Armed Forces was created and implemented in 1988. Field Psychologists comprise military officers who have at least a Bachelor degree in Psychology. These officers are affiliated to army units, air force and naval bases to meet their operational needs, but are centrally located in a department within the Ministry of Defence. (Slide 14)

This department, the Applied Behavioural Sciences Department, consist of 5 branches (Slide 15), namely the Social Psychology Branch, Personnel Psychology Branch, Training Psychology Branch, Field Psychology Branch, and Psych Doctrine and Development Branch. Aviation Psychology Branch resides within the Air Force, with professional linkages to the Department. (Slide 15)

The focus of the Field Psychology Branch is on the command effectiveness and psychological combat readiness of troops in the units, and the factors associated with them (Slide 16).

To achieve this, the field psychologist assumes 5 main roles, namely (See Slides 17-19):

- a. Expert in Psychological Matters Provides commanders with the psychological knowledge and techniques (e.g. how to cope with soldier's training fears and anxieties). He gives advice, conducts workshops, seminars, and produces relevant "kits" in his areas of expertise.
- b. Data Collector and Interpreter Collects data on the psychological aspects of a unit and interprets it meaningfully for the commander to assist him in decision making.
- c. Coach/Facilitator Serves as coach to the client commander in learning, problem solving and thinking processes, with the aim of imparting knowledge and skills so as to facilitate change in the unit.

- d. Process Consultant Is familiar with the culture and daily life of the client unit to be a more effective data collector-interpreter and coach, and to facilitate psychological processes and assist in the development of commanders.
- e. Applied Research Designs and conducts applied research to improve Psych services to commanders. Applied research is used to understand psychological factors and develop models contextualized to the SAF, develop instruments, unit assistance programs and "kits" (e.g. studies on past Mass AWOL cases, and how to deal with them), and to evaluate these instruments, programs and "kits".

An example of the close integration of Field Psychological services with the pace of training/operations in a typical unit is depicted in Slide 20.

Brief Summaries of Recruitment Projects

Project 1: Factors affecting recruitment of Scholars

The recruitment of talents is a critical item on the recruitment agenda. There were some concerns that over the years, the desired talents were displaying decreasing interest to take up a career with the SAF. Specifically, the impact of the following factors on the interest to sign up needed to be determined (See Slide 22):

- a. The quality of National Service experience
- b. Professed instances of poor leadership experienced in military by potential candidates
- c. The bond associated with an SAF scholarship
- d. The impact of peer influence on the decision to sign up
- e. The high expectations of being an SAF scholar
- f. The impact of competing scholarships

Methodology (Slides 23-24)

The methodology is summarized as follows:

- a. Conducted survey & focus groups on 1 intake of top officer cadets who were potential SAF scholars (i.e. top performers at 'A' levels exams with leadership ability)
- b. N=76 males in officer cadet school
- c. General survey followed by FG in groups of 8 to 10
- d. DV = intention to take up SAF scholarship
- e. 3-4 items per IV, total 12 IVs

- f. Multiple regression analysis (method=enter)

Results (Slide 25)

It was found that the most important factor affecting a candidate's intention to sign on was the initial interest in a career with the SAF, followed by the attractiveness of the scholarship as perceived by them. This was one study in which a non-significant finding is of greater relief to the organization.

Project 2: Factors affecting youths to sign on (Slides 26-27)

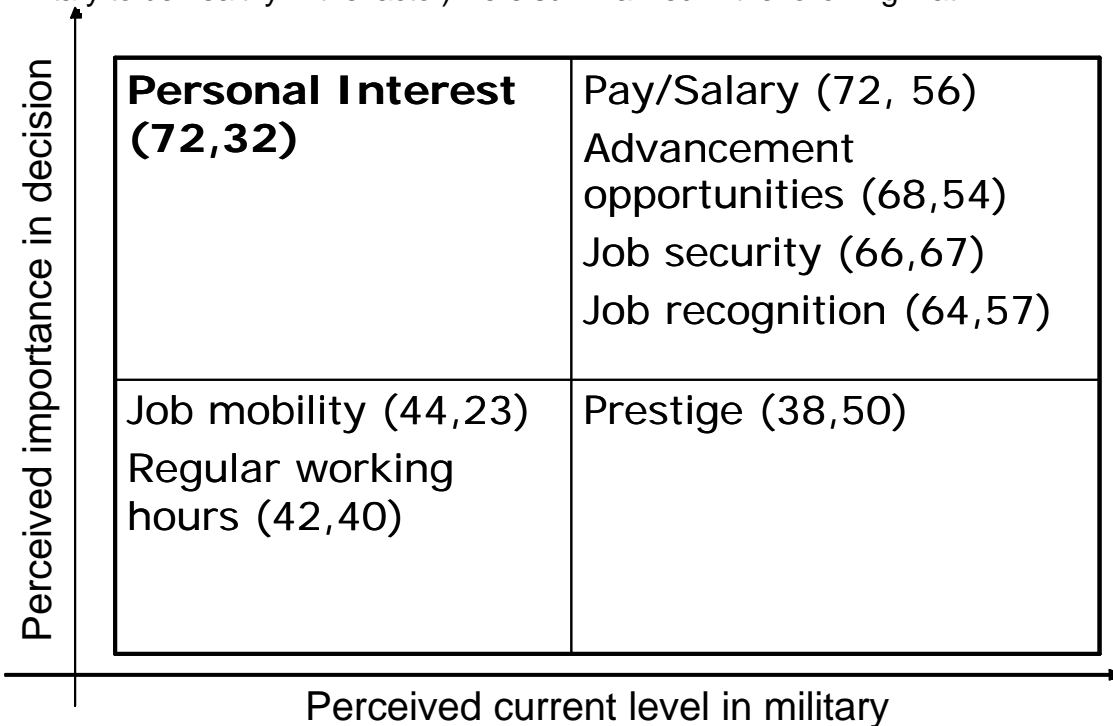
This study looked at what were the factors that influenced the decision in youths to sign on with the military, as well as how the military is faring in these factors.

The methodology is summarized as follows:

- a. Face to face interview of a random sample of 1028 Singaporeans aged 15-54.
- b. Respondents were asked to rate a pre-generated list of factors that they perceived as important in their career decision making.
- c. Respondents were also asked to rate the performance of the military in the same list of factors.

Findings

The findings in percentages (% rated to be personally important, % who rated the military to be healthy in the factor) were summarized in the following matrix:



From the matrix, it can be seen that “Personal Interest” is of greatest importance to youths signing on, but few youths perceive the military to be doing much to stimulate their interest.

The final project is still work in progress. It attempts to model the various factors that affect youth’s intention to sign on. A summary of the postulated model is found in Slide 30.

Thank you!