

Self-Efficacy, Attitude and Subjective Norms as Predictors of Youth's Intention to Enlist in Defence Services

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A steady decline in enlistment of youth in defence services poses a major challenge leading to acute shortages of human resource requirements in the defence sector. Identifying the major predictors of a youth's intention to join the defence forces will facilitate screening the right type of youth who possess the required life skills, attitudes and beliefs, potentials, temperament, and other personality characteristics relevant for discharging the duties and responsibilities of defence services. It was hypothesized that career intention would be predicted by their social, psychological characteristics such as Attitude towards Military and Self-Efficacy. Data was collected on Attitudes towards Military, Self-Efficacy, Subjective Norms and Enlistment Intentions from 119 Higher Secondary School students in Coimbatore district, TamilNadu. Factor analysis was carried to find out the core dimensions of attitudes towards joining Military. Regression analysis revealed that young adolescents' attitude towards military and self-efficacy significantly predicted their strong intention to enlist in the defence services. The results showed that the following four core attitude dimensions such as "Self and Physical Development", "Evaluation of Working Conditions and Benefits", "Perceived Risk", and "Team work and Patriotism" significantly predicted the intentions to enlist in the defence services. Also, subjective norms and self-efficacy significantly contributes to the enlistment intention.

Keywords: Intention, Attitude towards Military, Self-Efficacy, Enlistment Behavior

Career selection is one of the many important choices students make in determining future plans. Until very recently military services was not a routine career option for Indian civilians especially youth cohorts. Today's Indian Military is considered as the largest employer in India, and maintains the second largest standing army in the world.¹ Generally, new recruitment is done each year to pursue and complete the mission without any delays. In connection with changes in people's value orientations, the expansion of the sphere of leisure activities, and the emergence of new interests on other jobs, there has been a substantial decline in the level of school students' and college students' interest in the military enlistment. The current mission level of Indian military services requires about 12,000 enlistments to maintain the active

duty of the three major services (i.e. Army, Air Force and Navy).² In the face of increasing difficulties in meeting necessary recruitment goals, understanding and evaluating factors that influence the enlistment propensity or intention to serve in the military will facilitate the recruiter to attract the desired youth. Enlistment propensity or intention is an overall measure that summarizes the influence of a variety of factors in youth's interest in joining the military at a given point of time (Segal, Segal, Bachman, Freedman-Doan, & O'Malley, 1998). Individual propensity, or intention to behave in a certain way, is an important predictive characteristic of an individual's behavior. Not surprisingly, military enlistment research showed that an individual's stated intention to enlist in the military tends to be a strong predictor of actual

1 Indian Armed Forces, Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) page no 24, 2006.

2. The Week, The War within, 25th July, 2010.

enlistment (Orvis, Sastry, & McDonald, 1996). Bachman, Freedman-Doan, and O'Malley (1998) conducted a longitudinal study among high school seniors who were males in the academic year 1984–1991; stated on enlistment within the next six years. The result showed that 70 percent of those seniors, who said “definitely will join”, actually did so. Thus, we could infer that intentions can be predictors of future behavior for enlistment.

Similarly, Wilson, Greenlees, Hagerty, Hintze, and Lehnus (2000) used data from the Youth Attitude Tracking Survey (YATS) and found a strong association between propensity and enlistment. In addition, Asch, et al. (2001) found a strong, statistically significant relationship between intention to enlist and actual enlistment. Specifically, over half of those who demonstrated high intention during the survey later took the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) and one third of the youth eventually enlisted in the armed services.

Bachman, Freedman-Doan, and O'Malley (1998) analyzed longitudinal data to show that high school students' future intention to get a graduation degree from college was strongly predicted with an actual enrollment in college. Past studies emphasized that a strong, positive relationship between intention to perform a particular behavior and actual behavior prevailed.

Conceptual Framework

The theory of reasoned action (TRA) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975) and its successor, the theory of planned behavior (TPB) (Ajzen, 1991), are most frequently applied to a wide range of health-related behavioral prediction (Conner, & McMillan 1999; Conn, Tripp-Reimer, & Maas, 2003; Conner, & Norman, 2005). TRA posits that individual behavior in a given situation is best predicted by behavioral intention. Thus, the likelihood of engaging in the behavior increases when individuals' intentions to perform the behavior are stronger. Intention is defined as the subjective likelihood that one will perform or try to perform the behavior. The intention to perform a given behavior is, in turn, viewed as a function of three basic factors:- (a) the individual attitude towards the behavior, which refers to the

extent to which the individual has a favorable or an unfavorable evaluation of the behavior, (b) the subjective norms or perceived social pressure to perform or not to perform the behavior and (c) self-efficacy referring to the belief that one has the ability to successfully perform the behavior.

Attitude towards behavior is determined by the individual's belief about the outcome or attribute of performing the behavior weighed by evaluation of those outcomes or attributes (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2002). An individual holds a strong belief that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behavior and will have a positive attitude towards the behavior. Conversely, an individual who holds a strong belief that negative valued outcomes will result from the behavior will have a negative attitude towards the behavior. As a consequence, an individual will intend to perform certain behaviors when he/she evaluates it positively (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980).

Attitudes are expected to be a strong and direct predictor of intention of youth to join the military. The attitude and intention relation have been supported by a great deal of empirical evidence, including meta-analytic research and studies conducted in military context (Farley, Lehmann, & Ryan, 1981; Legree et al., 2000; Sheppard, Harwick, & Warshaw, 1988; Terry Hogg, & White, 2000). Research has indicated that the link between attitudes and intention is 1.5 times stronger than that of the norms-intention link (Terry, Hogg, & White, 2000). A study revealed that the youth's positive attitude towards military services significantly predicts their pre-enlistment behavior. Moreover, those parents who hold positive belief about the military are more likely to recommend their ward to enlist (Gibson & Marsh, 2006). Clearly, attitudes are strong predictors of behavioral intentions. However, attitudes are one of the components predicting behavioral intention; social expectations may also influence behavioral intentions.

Subjective norm refers to individuals' perceptions of social pressure from important referents to perform or not to perform the behavior (Netemeyer, Burton, & Johnson, 1991). It is developed from an individual's beliefs

about the anticipation of significant others or referent groups (i.e. family members, friends, teachers, etc.) regarding such behavior and his or her tendency to agree with those norms (Ajen & Fisbein, 1980). An individual intends to perform a certain behavior if he or she perceives a significant approval from others. Conversely, if the significant others disapprove the performance of certain behavior of the individual, the individual will not perform the intended behavior. When the youth plan for their future enlistment, it does not take place in isolation. Rather, youth's decisions are often made after consultation with important people in their social networks—with people who are trusted advisors (Emanuel, Marsh, Marsh, Boehmer, & Zucke, 2005). Hale, Householder, and Greene (2002) reveal that primary studies and meta-analyses have reported multiple correlation values of the combined effects of attitudes and subjective norms on behavioral intentions ranging from .63 to .71. Furthermore, research evidence showed an acceptable level of relationship between subjective norms and behavior intention (Berg, Jonson & Conner, 2000; Bissonnette & Contento, 2001).

Self-efficacy is a strong personal belief in skills and abilities to initiate a task and lead it to success (Bandura, 1997). Research has shown that expectations of personal success and mastery are strong predictors of whether or not someone will engage in a particular behavior. In general, an individual tends to get attracted towards tasks in which they are good at, and avoid tasks that the individual thinks he/she would do poorly. According to Bandura (1977, 1986) confidence in successfully performing a behavior, or self-efficacy, is instrumental in determining whether an individual will engage in a particular behavior. In a review of meta-analyses of the relationship between self-efficacy and intention, Hale et al. (2002) reported correlations ranging from .35 to .53. Emanuel and others (2005) youth poll report indicates that self-efficacy was the strongest predictor of Hispanic youth's military propensity and moderately predicts the American Black people's military intention. Fors et al. (2006) revealed that there is an association between efficacy beliefs and intention. Intention is a function of salient

beliefs about the likelihood that performing a particular behavior will lead to a specific outcome (Brown, 1999).

In the above context, the purpose of this study is to identify those nexuses in the career decision-making process that impacts directly on intention to enlist in the military.

Objective of this study

To examine the extent to which Attitude, Subjective Norms and Self-Efficacy predicts adolescents' military career intentions.

Methods

Sample Selection

For the present study, we have taken 190 male adolescent students who are studying higher secondary education in Coimbatore, TamilNadu. The students belong to the age group of 16–19 years with a mean age of 18.1 (S.D = 0.55). The majority of youth were between the age group of 17 and 19 years with the percentage of 47.3%, and 52.7% respectively, of the total population.

It is a known fact that military environment is a workplace with a lot of occupational demands, both physically and mentally (Dolan, & Adler, 2006). A study by Dertouzos, and Garber (2006) revealed that recruiting activities generally focused on individuals between 16–20 years old, with an emphasis on males reported that between fiscal years 2000–2005, 82 per cent of youth who enlisted in the military services are males. Similarly, Kleykamp (2006) interviewed 5,800 student samples about their inclination towards military enlistment, of which 85 per cent of respondents enlisted in active services in the following years, who are all males. Kleykamp (2006) also stated that more and more women are entering the military but, service in the armed forces remains a relatively rare event for most young women. The military job demands enlistee's going through various challenging phases beginning from training programs, and deployment in local and/or overseas areas (away from home environment for longer duration), to working in-low intensity areas, and exposure to dangerous work environments, etc., (Kumar, Parkash, & Mandal, 2013; Pflanz, 2002). Moreover, traditionally military job has

been considered as a male institution and male inherently possess the physical and mental ability to meet the job requirement in the military arena (Mankayi, 2006; Sackett, & Mavor, 2006). Besides, perceived from the social and cultural outlook (e.g. to bear the child, to take care of the family need, to cater to children's needs etc.) it is non-supportive for women to consider military as viable job (Segal et al., 1998). Based on the above said findings, for the present study, we have selected only male adolescent students in the sample.

Procedure

Participants were given a series of self-administered questionnaires, each of which gave a scale or provided data on Attitude towards Military, Subjective Norms, Self-Efficacy and the Intention to join military. During the administration, appropriate instructions were given to them by stating the aim and objectives of the proposed study. Before proceeding to the main study, due permission was obtained from the concerned school authority. The respondents were assured that the information given by them would be kept confidential and an informed consent was obtained from all participants. Finally, survey questionnaires were distributed to all the participants to furnish all the required information as stated in the questionnaire.

Pilot Study

A Pilot study was carried out since there are no formal tools to measure "attitude towards military" "subjective norms", and "intention". Thus, the questionnaires were developed and appropriate statistical tests were run to confirm their reliability and validity. The steps in developing questionnaires were as follows: Initially, adequate feedback from five experts' and five target respondents were solicited on several aspects pertaining to representativeness of those items with respect to the concerned constructs, ensuring the clarity of questions, questionnaire format, clarity of instructions and specificity of items pertaining to the chosen concepts. The participants were administered the same measures at a different point of time to check the test-retest reliability. Based on the guidelines provided by the authors, a gap of one month would be appropriate to test the reliability

(Nunnally, Bernstein, & Berge, 1967). Hence, for the present study, a gap of two months between the initial (interview) and later responses was maintained and to state confidently that follow-up administration would gain more depth (Raykov, & Marcoulides, 2011).

The discriminant index was calculated by using a point-biserial correlation in order to conduct further analysis. Finally, exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis were performed to validate the test construct items. The psychometric properties of the tool have been depicted at the end of each tool.

Measures

Attitude towards the Military (developed by the present authors) was used to assess participant's beliefs or feelings as well as evaluating the outcome of military enlistment. All the items are rated on a four point scale (0= strongly disagree; 4= strongly agree). The scale consists of four dimensions such as "Self and physical development", "Evaluation of working conditions and benefits", "Perceived risk" and "Team work and patriotism." The total score of all the items represents the global score for attitude towards the military. Higher scores correspond to stronger/ favorable attitude towards military services and vice versa for lower scores. The description of the four dimensions of the scale is as follows.

Self and physical development: It measures a person's belief that military enlistment makes one more physically fit, self-disciplined, can obey commands etc; for example, "I feel that my Self-discipline will improve after enlisting in Military Service".

Evaluation of working conditions and benefits: It refers to the persons' appraisal about working conditions, getting job benefits; for example, "I feel that enlisting in Military Service will be beneficial to earn more incentives with a good pay to live comfortably".

Perceived Risk: This measures how the person perceives risks in military and evaluates the possibilities of getting involved in risky situations; for example, "I feel that Military service will have the risk of facing terrorist attacks".

Team work and Patriotism: It measures a person's ability to get along with team members at workplace and patriotic motivation underlying towards enlistment; for example, "I feel that Military Job involves more interaction with colleagues and team".

Psychometric Properties

In our samples, internal consistency for the Attitude towards the Military total score was significantly correlated with the other scores. On the dimensional level, internal consistencies were in the adequate-to-good range. The following alpha coefficients were obtained: Self and physical development = .88; Evaluation of working conditions and benefits = .85; Perceived risk = .83; and Team work and patriotism = .87. Intercorrelation between the four dimensions with the total score were significant. Overall the dimensions show modest but, significant correlations suggesting that the dimensions represent distinct constructs of Attitude towards the Military scale.

Subjective Norm Scale (developed by the present authors) was used to measure adolescent's perception of the influence of his significant others about his military enlistment. The scale consists of three statements to elicit the beliefs of the participants about people who may influence their likelihood to enlist in the military. The responses were indicated on a 5-point scale "Extremely should not" to "Extremely Should". For example, "If I like to enlist in the military, my parents will show favor to my enlistment". The score of subjective norm is summing all the scores of the three statements. The possible range of scores is 3-15.

Psychometric Properties

This scale was conceptualized as a one-dimensional scale, which was supported in the exploratory factor analysis (EFA). In the preliminary analyses, test-retest reliability of the scale was assessed by evaluating the consistency of the responses of the student's sample over time. The inter-correlation coefficient between the Subjective Norm scale scores on the first administration and the follow-up administration was high ($r=.95$). In confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) Convergent

validity of the scale was supported by the scale's significant positive relationship with other measures, including a self-rating of intention to enlist, attitude towards military and self-efficacy. Discriminant validity was established by demonstrating that this subjective norm scale is related to other constructs but, distinct from measuring the influence of significant others who actually had high intention to enlist in military services than their counterparts (i.e. people with low intention to enlist in military services). In the present study sample, the Cronbach alpha score ($\alpha = .89$) ascertains adequate reliability of the scale.

Self-Efficacy

The Generalized Self-Efficacy Scale (GSES) developed by Matthias Jerusalem and Ralf Schwarzer (1992) consists of 10-items designed to assess optimistic self-beliefs. The belief is that one can perform a novel or difficult task, or cope with adversity in various domains of human functioning. Perceived self-efficacy facilitates goal-setting, effort investment, persistence in the face of barriers and recovery from setbacks. For example, "I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough". A higher score indicates greater self-efficacy. Juarez (2008) reported that the scale had adequate psychometric properties, such as test-retest reliability of .89, and Cronbach's alphas ranging from .76 to .90. Moreover, a study by Luszczynska, Scholz, and Schwarzer (2005) confirmed the validity and psychometric results and advocated that general self-efficacy scale appears to be a universal construct. Therefore, it can be stated that the scale has no cultural barriers in administering in the Indian context. Similarly, the present study data yields a Cronbach's Alpha score ($\alpha = .84$), which demonstrates an adequate reliability.

Intention to Enlist in Military Scale (developed by the present authors) was used to assess participant's determination to military enlistment within the next few years. The scale consists of three statements to measure the enlistment Intention. The response options ranged from 1 "Definitely not" to 5 "Definitely"; for example, "How likely it is that you would be serving in the military in the next few years". The possible

range of score is 3-15 with a high score reflecting the higher level of intention to enlist.

Psychometric Properties

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using maximum likelihood estimation was conducted using AMOS 21 (SPSS, 2012), to evaluate the proposed uni-model structure loading onto an "Intention to Enlist in Military". The results support the proposed scale of structure of one factor, which comprised of items assessing "Intention to Enlist in Military". The standardized estimates of the factor loading of the Intention to Enlist in Military were high and the score was .81. The standardized estimates of the factor loading of the items on the single factors between .68 and .81. Moreover, in the present study sample, the Cronbach's Alpha score ($\alpha = .93$) ascertains the adequate reliability of the scale.

Data Analysis

The present study employed three statistical techniques such as factor analysis, Pearson correlation coefficient, and multiple regression analysis.

(i) The factor analysis was used to check whether the factor loading for each item has adequate variance for being selected to measure

- (a) Attitude towards Military,
- (b) Subjective Norms, and
- (c) Intention to Enlist in Military.

These are already reported.

(ii) The Pearson correlation coefficient was

used to examine the extent to which identified factors are related to one another.

(iii) Finally, Stepwise multiple linear regression analysis was used to test whether the independent variables viz., Attitude towards Military, Subjective Norms, and Self-Efficacy significantly predict the criterion variable (i.e. Intention to Enlist in Military).

Results

The correlations between all variables were computed by applying the Pearson product moment method. The correlations among all the variables are presented in Table 1. Variables measured in this study, namely, Attitude, Subjective Norms and Self-Efficacy demonstrated a strong and positive correlation with Intention to enlist. With respect to Attitude towards military, the four dimensions such as Evaluation of working conditions and benefits, Self and physical development, Perceived risk, and Teamwork and patriotism was found to be positively related with intention to enlist in military. Subjective norms for military enlistment was positively correlated with intention to enlist in military. In addition, there was a positive relationship between intention to enlist and a person's self-efficacy. Hence, overall relationship indicates the model showed a strong and positive relationship to intention.

The multiple regression analysis was performed to find out predictive factors such as Attitude towards Military, Subjective Norms, and Self-Efficacy that account for the maximum

Table 1: Correlation between Attitude dimensions, Subjective Norms, Self-Efficacy and Intention to Enlist

Sl. No	Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Self and physical development	-						
2	Evaluation of working conditions and benefits	.41**	-					
3	Perceived risk	-.34**	-.37**	-				
4	Team work and patriotism	.39**	.45**	-.48**	-			
5	Subjective norms	.43**	.52**	-.55**	.38**	-		
6	Self-efficacy	.36**	.57**	-.49**	.41**	.47**	-	
7	Intention to enlist	.63**	.61**	-.48**	.55**	.45**	.47**	-

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 2: Significant predictors of Intention to enlist in military shown by multiple linear regression analysis^a

Predictors	β	S.E	t	P (value)
Self and physical development	.20	.022	2.64	.001
Evaluation of working conditions and benefits	.28	.014	4.10	.0001
Perceived risk	-.13	.029	-2.82	.001
Team work and patriotism	.14	.028	2.60	.001
Subjective norms	.20	.031	2.98	.001
Self-efficacy	.12	.014	2.43	.001

^a Full regression model (n = 190): F (6,182) = 68.88 adjusted R² = .68; p<.01

proportion of the variance in criterion variable Intention to Enlist. The multiple regression was conducted to determine the contribution of the independent variables in predicting enlistment behavior. Regression results indicate that the overall model significantly predicts enlistment intention, (R² = .688, R² adj = .217, F (6,182) = 68.88; p<.01). The results showed that the attitude variables such as Self and physical development ($\beta = 0.20$, p < .01), Evaluation of working conditions and benefits ($\beta = 0.28$, p < .01), Perceived risk ($\beta = -.13$, p < .01) and Teamwork and Patriotism ($\beta = .14$, p < .01) were significant predictors of intention to enlist. Subjective norm significantly contributed to the prediction of intention to enlist in military ($\beta = 0.20$, p < .01) with a positive, non-standardized beta coefficient. Finally, self-efficacy significantly contributed to the prediction of the youth's intention ($\beta = 12$, p < .01) as a criterion variable.

Discussion and Implications

The results of the present study showed how the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) increases the understanding of the factors that influence and determine youth's enlistment behavior. According to the present result, an attempt was made to gain insight about the predictors of enlistment-intention of youth in a natural and structural way (Sheeran, Conner, & Norman, 2001). The components of TRA such as attitude, subjective norms and self-efficacy were correlated significantly with intention to enlist, as the theory predicts. In this study, two latent variables emerged, such as "Self

and physical development" and "Evaluation of working conditions and benefits", which are ultimate determinants (i.e. antecedent belief) that operate through attitude. Hence, the rigorous physical fitness provided in the basic training may deter enlistment for those who are uncertain of their abilities to stand up with the prescribed fitness. Therefore, conducting a frequent campaign by the defence personnel to guide the aspirants about the challenges embedded in basic training and required physical fitness may facilitate to form a healthy belief about their competences, which in turn, influence a qualified youth to enlist (Sackett & Mavor, 2004). Apart from depicting the proper utilization of the persons' mental and physical skills during the military services, defence authorities could highlight the possibility of working with highly committed crews, acquiring leadership skills, opportunities for self-development, etc., and endorse the awareness about the working conditions in the military to enhance the positive attitude on forming a high enlistment intention. It recognizes that an individual expresses a more positive attitude, addresses the awareness of military benefits and evaluates the benefits in terms of a secured job with comfortable pay, including several fringe benefits, which they get after enlistment. In the long term, services emphasized on travel around the country, doing an adventurous job and other varieties of positive lifetime experiences associated within military services, act as a reinforcement to enlist (Subramanian, Velayudhan, & Vinothkumar,

2013). It seems reasonable to speculate that youth evaluate positive possibilities that a military job offers; hence, they may be more interested in enlistment and apparently comfortable with the military pay and lifestyle. Sizable increase in pay, rewards, several fringe benefits and provision of an educational loan after completing a short-service or in between the service may attract youth to enlist in military. The action involved in the work of the military is attached with several perceived personal risks of getting injuries, including death, may decline the enlistment. On the whole, the youth who want to join the military services perceive military services as a combination of patriotism, adventure, and economically beneficial career may increase the enlistment intention (Yeung, & Gifford, 2011). Therefore, recruiters should promote the patriotic motto such as “military is the right job to serve for my nation” through various strategies, which may possibly enhance the service value among the youth.

The findings demonstrate the significant others such as peers, teachers and parents have an influence on adolescent’s career decision making. The result emphasized that associations with social supporters strongly predicted intention to enlist. During adulthood, peer groups become important socializing agents and majorly influence group norms. Positive regard about military career by significant others may create a major impact on the military enlistment decision. In general, the more a person sees significant others as being supportive of a decision to enlist in the military, the more likely it is that the person will intend to enlist in the military. Thus, recruiters promote the enlisting by sending brochures, weekly letters to attract more positive attention from the youth’s primary influences, namely parents, teachers and career counselors (Kleykamp, 2006).

Finally, the results emphasized that youths who have a strong expectation about their personal success in military services are more likely to have a strong intention to enlist. It means that enlisting in a military service requires facing any hardship or struggling physically and mentally with others and fulfilling the stringent

standards to accomplish the challenging tasks. If youths possess a strong belief about their ability to overcome those impediments successfully, they will enlist in military services willingly and confidently (Mavor, & Sackett, 2003).

Conclusion

The results presented here are useful for Army policymakers. The findings from testing these models can assist in the development of personnel policies designed to influence high quality youths to enlist in the defence services. A major limitation of the study is that it did not measure, the actual behavior variable, skills, and environmental constraints within the integrated theory. Even though intentions are the most immediate antecedent of behavioral change, measuring actual behavior, skills, and environmental constraint is helpful in addressing the relationship between intention and behavior.

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