

Causes of Higher Secondary Students' Preference for Military Career*

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A number of studies have been reported on occupational preference (Krishnan, 1956, Sinha and Niwas, 1958, Chatterjee and Mullick, 1961, Joshi, 1963, Kunungo and Panda, 1966, Pestonjee et al 1967). But none of them studies the preference for Military Career except mentioning it as a passing reference (Cook 1962). Sinha (1972) rightly remarks that "One is not infrequently struck by the absence of any work on problems falling within the area of Vocational Choice and Guidance" in Military Psychology. It is in this perspective that a study was undertaken to survey various aspects of vocational choice for Military Career. First report in the series has already been published (GAUTAM, 75).***

SAMPLE

As the Higher Secondary Examination is minimum academic qualification for getting commission in the Indian Armed Forces except for certain Technical Corps, it was decided to conduct this survey on the Higher Secondary (final year) students and their equivalents, that is first year students in Intermediate Colleges. There are only two Higher Secondary Schools in Roorkee, namely St. Gabriel Academy and the Central School. The former is purely a male school and runs only Science Classes and while the latter is co-educational and runs both Science and Arts Classes. All the male students of XI Stb. in both these schools were taken as sample for the present study. But on the day of data collection only 45 male students could be available. The St. Gabriel provided 24 and the Central School 21. This number was considered small and it was decided to increase the same by including Ist Year male students of local Intermediate Colleges. 42 students from the BSM Inter College and 43 students from the Government Inter College were randomly selected.

* This study was conducted in 1975 when the author was posted at Selection Centre North, ROORKEE.

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*** Published in the USI Journal July-Sept. 1975.

Table 1

Showing parental education and income.

Institution	Parental education				Parental income			
	Illite- rate/ Primary School	High School/ Inter- mediate	Gradu- ate and above	Total	Below Rs. 500 p.m.	Rs. 500- 1500 p.m.	Above 1500	Total
Central School	—	12	9	21	9	10	2	21
St. Gabriel	—	6	18	24	—	15	9	24
Govt. Inter College	8	13	22	43	16	26	1	43
BSM Inter College	17	18	7	42	30	12	—	42
Total	27	47	56	130	56	62	12	130

METHOD

A proforma named "Career Preference Proforma" (CPP) was developed to record necessary information from the members of the sample. It was divided into two parts. The first part dealt with personal particulars and the second contained questions pertaining to vocational preference and reasons for preferring/not preferring military career.

DATA COLLECTION

Group-testing method was followed to administer the above mentioned proforma on the students of each institution separately. Teacher-in-charge of the class in every institution was requested to remain present in the class throughout the period of testing so that the students would respond to the questions with adequate understanding and alertness.

In the beginning, the investigator read out the whole proforma and then answered the clarifications sought for by a couple of students. Then the students were asked to fill in the proforma with necessary information. There was no time limit. However, all the proforma duly filled in, could be collected back within a period of 45 minutes. Thus full data was collected within four days from all the four institutions by approaching each institution on each consecutive day. The classified data is given under the following heads :—

Table 2

Showing number and percentage of students from each of the institutions giving reasons of their preference/no preference and giving no reason at all.

Institution	No. of students giving no reason of their preference/no preference for military career	No. of students giving reasons of their preference for military career	No. of students giving reasons of their non-preferring military career	Total
Central School N=21	2(9.52%)	17(80.96%)	2(9.52%)	21
St. Gabriel Academy	3(12.50%)	10(41.67%)	11(45.83%)	24
Govt. Inter College	8(18.60%)	27(62.35%)	8(18.60%)	43
BSM Inter College	7(16.66%)	18(40.48%)	17(42.86%)	42
Total	20	72	38	130

Table 3

Showing reasons of preferring military career as stated by students from various institutions.

Ser. No.	Reasons of preferring military career	Schoolwise No. of students				Total N=130
		Central School N=21	St Gabriel Academy N=24	BSM Inter College N=43	Govt. Inter College N=43	
1.	It is a service to nation.	14	5	9	15	43
2.	It keeps one fully busy.	2	—	—	1	3
3.	It is an outdoor job.	2	—	—	—	2
4.	It provides good pay and other facilities.	3	—	1	1	5
5.	It is a respectable job.	2	1	1	4	8
6.	It is an adventurous job.	3	2	—	—	5
7.	It makes life disciplined.	2	—	1	6	9
8.	It promises good prospects.	1	1	—	—	2
9.	It keeps one fit and healthy.	—	1	—	2	3
10.	It enables one to visit different parts of the country.	—	1	—	1	2
11.	It fits in the pattern of interests.	—	3	6	4	13
12.	It has become almost a family tradition.	2	—	—	3	5
Total		31	14	18	37	100

Table 4

Showing reasons of not preferring military career as stated by students from various institutions.

Ser. No.	Reasons of not preferring military career	Schoolwise No. of students giving each reason				Total
		Central School	St. Gabriel Academy	BSM Inter College	Govt. Inter College	
1.	It provides strict atmosphere	—	3	—	—	3
2.	It is full of risks to life.	—	2	—	3	5
3.	It involves killing.	—	2	—	—	2
4.	Transfers are frequent.	—	1	—	—	1
5.	Unable to resign as per one's convenience.	—	1	—	—	1
6.	Life becomes monotonous.	—	1	—	—	1
7.	Postings are far from home.	—	—	1	—	1
8.	Parents discourage.	—	—	1	—	1
9.	Already decided another career.	1	2	3	2	8
10.	Physically handicapped.	1	2	1	—	4
11.	Lack adequate ability.	—	1	—	—	1
12.	Compulsory Maths in NDA Competition.	—	2	—	—	2
13.	Interested in higher studies.	—	—	—	—	1
14.	Not interested.	—	3	15	3	21
15.	Pay is not much attractive.	—	1	—	2	3
Total		2	21	22	10	55

Table 5

Showing reasons of preferring and not-preferring military career in relation to the students' parental education and income.

PART I

Ser. No.	Reasons of preferring military career	Parents' education				Parents' monthly income			Total
		Illiterate/primary classes N=27	High School/Intermediate N=47	Graduate & above N=56	Total 130	Below Rs 500/- p. m. N=56	Rs 500/- to 1500/- p.m. N=64	Above Rs. 1500/- p.m. N=10	
1.	It is a service to nation.	6	19	18	43	16	24	3	43
2.	It keeps one fully busy.	—	2	1	3	2	3	—	3
3.	It is an outdoor job.	—	2	—	2	—	2	—	2
4.	It provides good pay and other facilities.	1	2	2	5	2	3	—	5
5.	It is a respectable job	—	6	2	8	2	5	1	8
6.	It is an adventurous job.	—	2	3	5	—	5	—	5
7.	It makes life disciplined	1	4	4	9	3	5	1	9
8.	It promises good prospects.	1	—	1	2	1	—	1	2
9.	It keeps one fit and healthy.	1	2	—	3	2	1	—	3
10.	It enables one to visit different parts of the country.	—	—	2	2	—	2	—	2
11.	It fits in the pattern of interests.	3	4	6	13	6	6	1	13
12.	It has become almost a family tradition.	1	3	1	5	2	3	—	5
Total		14	46	40	100	34	59	7	100

PART II

Ser. No.	Reasons of not preferring military career	Parents' education				Parents' monthly income			
		Illiterate/primary classes N=27	High School/Intermediate N=47	Graduate & above N=56	Total N=130	Below Rs 500/- p.m. N=56	Rs 500/- to 1500/- p.m. N=69	Above Rs 1500/- p.m. N=10	Total N=130
1.	It provides strict atmosphere.	—	—	3	3	—	2	1	3
2.	It is full of risk to life.	1	—	4	5	1	2	2	5
3.	It involves killing.	—	—	2	2	—	1	1	2
4.	Transfers are frequent.	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	1
5.	Unable to resign as per one's convenience.	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	1
6.	Life becomes monotonous.	—	—	1	1	—	—	1	1
7.	Postings are far from home.	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	1
8.	Parents discourage.	1	—	—	1	1	—	—	1
9.	Already decided another career.	1	4	3	8	2	4	2	8
10.	Physically handicapped.	—	2	2	4	2	1	1	4
11.	Lack adequate ability.	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	1
12.	Compulsory Maths in NDA competition.	—	—	2	2	—	2	—	2
13.	Interested in higher studies.	—	—	1	1	—	1	—	1
14.	Not interested.	6	8	7	21	16	4	1	21
15.	Pay is not much attractive.	—	—	3	3	—	2	1	3
Total		10	14	31	55	21	21	8	55

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

A glance at the table 3 reveals that the largest number of students (18.60%) giving no specific reason of their preferring/not preferring military career comes from the Govt Inter College followed by the BSM Inter College. This shows lack of awareness and specificity of goal on their part. They seem to have made their response of occupational preference almost on hearsay basis without making any serious attempt of going into the details of military career. This as compared to the Central School and the St. Gabriel Academy is understandable in the light of their parental background as table 2 presents that there is no student from these two schools whose parents' education is nil or below High School while there are 8 and 17 students in this bracket from the Govt. Inter College and BSM Inter College respectively. Almost similar is the case with economic status. There is no student in St. Gabriel Academy having his father's income less than Rs. 500/- p.m. while in the above mentioned two Inter Colleges their number in this category is 16 and 30 respectively. Though there are 9 students in this economic bracket from the Central School, yet they seem better aware of military career and more specific about their occupational choice. One of the reasons of this striking finding may be that out of these 9 students 5 students belong to the families of OR's and JCO's. As a result, they have better awareness of military career.

This shows, in nut shell, that the parental background plays an important role in children's general awareness and facilitates their task of occupational choice.

Table 3 also reveals that the largest percentage (45.83) of students not preferring military career comes from the St. Gabriel Academy which is a Convent School while the lowest percentage (9.52) in this category comes from the Central School. This finding clearly shows that a widely held belief that the Convent Schools are greater source of the armed forces, does not hold true any more. This study shows that their place is being taken up by the Central Schools.

Table 4 provides a list of 12 reasons which motivate the students towards military career. These reasons may very well be called occupational values of Higher Secondary students in relation to military career. It is seen that the largest part of the sample perceives the military career as a service to nation and an evidence of patriotism. Though this value receives the largest number of responses among all the values in every institution, yet the Central School provides highest percentage of students sharing it. The St. Gabriel comes last.

Value No. 3 in the same table is shared by Central School students only. Similarly values No. 7 and 11 are more shared by the Govt. Inter College and the BSM Inter College students respectively. When taken on the whole, it is the values Nos. 1, 5, 7 and 11 which attract relatively larger number of responses i.e. 43, 8, 9 and 13 respectively.

Table 5 reveals that there are 15 causes which discourage the students from preferring military as a career for them. Thus, a very broad comparison of table 4 and 5 reveals that the students find negative points (15) more than the positive ones (12) in the military career. Institutionwise, we see that the students of the St. Gabriel Academy are more conscious of negative aspects of military career than those of any other institution. Their positive responses being 14 and the negative ones 21 further confirm the finding that the convent school students are no more so much interested in military career as they might be earlier.

The same trend is seen among the BSM students whose positive response (18) have been exceeded by the negative ones (22). A plausible reason may be found in the fact that they were commerce students and as such would have decided their occupational choice for jobs like banking, accountancy etc. This arguments is confirmed by the finding that 15 responses indicate lack of interest in military career on their part. Once they are not interested, they will tend to perceive its negative aspects more than the positive ones.

Table 5 also reveals that the values No. 2, 9 and 14 are shared relatively by more students. Value No. 2 indicates that the hazardous aspects of the military career is more obvious to the students. Value No. 9 implies that some of the students choose their career before they enter higher secondary school wherein bifurcation of the teaching subjects starts. This is in contrast to a widely held belief that in our society the concept of vocational choice develops relatively at a later stage. Similarly, value No. 14 reveals that a number of students included in this study have not developed interest in military services and hence do not prefer it as a career for them.

Table 6 gives distribution of causes of both choosing and not choosing military career along with the parents' education and income, Both educational and economic status have been divided into three brackets each. Part I of the table reveals that the students whose parents are either illiterate or have obtained education upto primary school level, are relatively least aware of the positive aspects of military career. There are 27 students in this bracket while their

responses are only 14. As compared to this, the response percentage of students whose parents' educational level is High School and Graduation is 46% and 40% respectively. Economically also it is the middle class parents whose children are more aware of military career. For instance their children contribute 92.19% of the total response while those of low and high income group contribute 60.71% and 70.00% respectively. It is the low bracket; that is those having monthly income below Rs. 500/- p.m. wherein the response percentage is 34 while in case of other two brackets, the same is 59% and 70%. Thus it is the category of both educationally and economically middle class parents whose children are more aware of positive aspects of military career than the children of those parents who fall in low and upper brackets of educational attainment and economic status.

If we look at the same part of the table value-wise, we see that value No. 1 is more shared by the children of middle class parents. So is the case with values Nos 5 and 7. It is the value No. 11 only which is, however, more shared by the children of those parents who are educationally graduates but economically fall in the low and middle income groups.

Part II of the same table almost confirms above findings. For instance, the percentage of negative responses is the lowest (29.79%) in case of children whose parents constitute middle class both educationally and economically as compared to other categories where the percentage is 37.04 and 55.36 respectively. It is again seen here that an important cause of not choosing military career is the lack of interest.

CONCLUSION

The higher secondary students perceive more negative attributes than the positive ones in the military career. Institution-wise, Central School students are more motivated towards military career than those of other institutions specially the convent school. In terms of parental background, the students coming from middle class homes are more inclined than those coming from other social strata. Major aspects of motivation for military career are patriotism, social recognition, discipline, interest and family tradition while the the main deterrents are element of risk involved, self-concept, lack of interest and an earlier decision of career.

SUGGESTIONS

Students relatively at an early stage such as VIII Standard should be appraised of various aspects of military career such as procedure of selection qualifications, emoluments and future prospects. Negative aspects as risk to life and hardships of field should also be put forth in correct perspective so that there remains the least scope for any wrong notion or unrealistic expectation.

Various media of communication should be used for this purpose. Lectures by retired military officers or civilian psychologists working at the Services Selection Boards can probably be more effective than any other method. As the vocational interests are not inborn, these can be inculcated by feeding information.

While doing so, more attention should be paid to the Central Schools or other ordinary institutions which provide education to the large population specially the children of middle class people. Convent Schools should no more be considered as the main source of supply to the officer-cadre of the armed forces as per the findings of the present study.

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