

Attributes and Skills Related to Success in the South African Operational Forces

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Abstract—South African citizens wanting to join the military and Operational Forces are required to meet specific requirements that are physically, mentally, and emotionally challenging to the extreme. A low percentage of candidates successfully complete the course and behavioural science research activities focused on making a contribution towards enabling increased training success within the South African Operational Forces environment is a top priority. The financial implications of training Operational Forces candidates is exorbitant, therefore it is important to be able to identify candidates who have the potential to successfully complete Operational Forces training early on in the process. One of the important aims of this research has included enabling Operational Forces instructors to identify the desired candidate behaviour in addition to specific and unique requirements which will ultimately allow the individual candidates to become a successful Operational Forces member. The aim of the study was to gain insight into the experiences and opinions of permanent Operational Forces staff during 2005 and again in 2015, regarding the unique requirements expected of a successful Operational Forces member, to ultimately enable that individual to become part of the Operational Forces staff. Data was collected through the use of a questionnaire designed specifically for the purpose of the study. The self-administered questionnaire consisted of 10 questions all of which aimed to gain a better understanding of the unique requirements expected of a successful Operational Forces recruit, from the perspective of permanent Operational Forces staff. Data was collected at two points in time; in 2005 and in 2015. The two samples represented the opinions of 20% of the total sample of Operational Forces members over two occasions; 10 years apart. All participants were permanent Operational Forces staff with varying ranks and years of experience. The data obtained from the questionnaires were captured and qualitatively analysed using ATLAS.ti in order to identify themes and specific attributes associated with being a successful Operational Forces member. Precaution was taken to protect the identity of the participants and the sensitive nature of the information obtained.

Keywords—Characteristics, recruitment, selection, operational forces, military, success, unique requirements, desired candidate behaviours.

I. INTRODUCTION

THE Operational Forces is a force multiplier for the South African National Defence Force (SANDF). They are viewed as a highly exclusive specialised military unit which operates under the auspices of joint operations. Being a part of the Operational Forces is more than just a 9-5 job, but is rather a way of life. It is a diverse working environment with its own organisational culture combined with a unique set of challenges and stressors. Operational Forces members are

exposed to great physical and mental stressors and need to be prepared to be deployed anywhere in the world, at any given time. The selection of the appropriate candidates is therefore critical [23].

Recruiting, selecting and successfully training suitable Operational Forces members is a key challenge not only in South Africa, but also worldwide. With high standards come high attrition rates. In South Africa, significant investments are being made in research to improve the training success rates. In the South African Operational Forces approximately 7.5% of recruits successfully complete the rigorous selection training. In the region of 80% of recruits are lost during the pre-selection and a further 12.5% is lost during selection phase. Traditional methods of Operational Forces assessment and selection have until recently focussed almost exclusively on physical fitness and intelligence. Over the past few years this approach is gradually being replaced by the measurement of a combination of attributes such as physical capabilities, cognitive attributes and non-cognitive attributes like personality, emotional intelligence, motivation, mental toughness and psychological intelligence research objectives [24]. This study aimed to identify and explore what unique requirements, over and above physical fitness, ultimately enable the candidate to become a successful Operational Forces member.

II. BACKGROUND

Civilians wanting to join the military and Operational Forces are required to meet a number of basic requirements. All candidates should be South African citizens between the ages of 18 and 22, have completed or are currently in Grade 12, have no record of serious criminal offences, are not area bound, are preferably single, proficient in English and have successfully completed an entry test. In addition, all candidates should comply with the medical fitness requirements for appointment in the SANDF. Only after completing one year of military service can the candidate now apply to the broader Operational Forces. In this time the candidate should prove that they are proficient in reading, writing and speaking English. Candidates also need to successfully complete an entry test specific to the Operational Forces. The entry test consists of physical and mental fitness tests as well as psychometric tests and a personal interview. It has been noted that only 30% of potential candidates generally pass the Operational Forces entry tests and interview [18].

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Successful candidates then move into a six week pre-selection phase. During this phase, the candidates are provided with basic infantry training to ensure that training standards are equivalent between candidates. They are subjected to stressful physical and mental conditions for extended periods of time. Training takes place six and a half days per week for up to 20 hours per day. Only candidates who are both mentally and physically strong make it through this pre-selection phase. Candidates who pass this stage move into a one week final selection phase. The final selection exercise was designed to make it impossible for a person to complete on finite physical resources alone. During this challenging week, candidates do not ordinarily sleep, eat or a rest. They are constantly monitored by a qualified staff member and psychologist and are given various psychometric tests at different stages. The purposes of the selection is to stimulate extreme physical and mental conditions to identify whether candidates are able to control all fear, anxiety, stress, exhaustion or any other aspect, and are able to continue going indefinitely under these circumstances. Successful candidates then progress to a 51 week initial training course. After passing this basic training cycle, recruits then receive their badge. New members are then able to select a specific field of specialised training [17], [23]. It is clear from these requirements that the main focus has been purely on the physical ability of the candidates. A career with the Operational Forces is often a lifestyle resolution as much as a career choice, so although physical ability is a big component of the selection of new recruits, this is not enough to determine how successful the candidate will be in the field. The stress associated with meeting the demands of this challenging environment may cause those who are physically strong but not psychologically fit to drop out or give up. Research pertaining to the inclusion of “additional discrete personal attributes beyond traditional cognitive ability and personality traits”, particularly within the stress management domains of hardiness, perseverance and decision making as the inability of a recruit to manage stress during training will ultimately lead to high levels of attrition amongst members or to the development of psychological health problems. It is therefore of utmost importance to consider multiple facets of the individual rather than just one component or characteristic [12], [17].

A. The ‘Whole Man’ Concept

From as early as 1987, we have seen a considerable shift in literature from the physical to the psychological. In his book *Green Berets, SEALs, and Spetsnaz*, Collins describes the essence of all special operations force personnel. He argues that innate intelligence, physical strength and standard training is not enough and that other factors such as temperament, resourcefulness, ingenuity, pragmatism, patience, self-discipline and dependability should be considered. Physical fitness alone does not constitute a ‘complete’ soldier. When considering the character of successful Operational Forces members, people from different backgrounds may instinctively provide descriptive terms such as ‘adventurous’,

‘brave’ and ‘motivated’. These descriptions represent what is known as traits [4]. According to The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, a trait is defined as “a distinguishing feature, as of a person's character.” Hence, there are many inimitable traits within this group [20].

Over the past few years, there has been increased interest in this approach. The concept of the ‘whole man’ is based on this shift and is increasingly being used by psychologists within the defence environment to evaluate the individual’s suitability for the job. In order to fully assess whether an individual is well suited to a specific job, the ‘whole man’ or the ‘man as a whole’ should be considered. This includes the general structure of his being as well as his strengths and weakness for the job and general environment [9].

The shift away from assessments being based exclusively on physical fitness has seen us move towards the measurement of a combination of attributes such as physical capabilities, cognitive attributes and non-cognitive attributes. Cognitive attributes are “brain-based skills” which we require to perform any task. These attributes contribute to the ways that we learn, remember, solve problems, and pay attention. Cognitive ability generally encompasses both 1) fluid intelligence (the rate at which people learn) and 2) crystallised intelligence (acquired knowledge) [10]. Non-cognitive attributes on the other hand, includes soft skills, personality traits, non-cognitive abilities, character skills and even socioemotional skills. These non-cognitive attributes, which include interpersonal skills, persistence and communication skills among others, develop over the course of the individuals life (some develop these skills much earlier than others). Unlike cognitive attributes, non-cognitive attributes or skills cannot be objectively measured through IQ or achievement tests [10].

The shift from the physical to the psychological is mainly evident in international literature, particularly with the United States Army, with a lack of research available in this area within the African context. While most Armies around the world know what they are looking for in a new recruit, the challenge has always been finding ways to reliably predict beforehand who these desirable individuals are and screen out those who present with the undesirable characteristics [7].

B. Attributes and Skills Related to Success

Over the years, we have seen a shift from the physical to the psychology take place within the defence environment, with many of the new approaches now focussing on the assessment of the whole person. Most of this research has been done at the Research Army Institute in the United States. A review of the available literature indicated that there were a number of attributes and skills (over and above physical fitness), which were important factors that contributed to career success in the defence environment. There has been a paucity of research done within the African context and this study aims to address this issue. A summary of the attributes and skills related to success, which was identified in the literature is found in Table I.

TABLE I
ATTRIBUTES RELATED TO CAREER SUCCESS IN THE MILITARY [2], [3], [6], [11], [16], [22].

Maturity	Calm	Organised	Persistent
Commitment	Hardy	Excitement seeker	Adaptability
Judgement	Stability	Competitive	Reliable
Courage	Psychologically fit	High intellectual ability	Self-confidence
Initiative	Think practically	Risk taker	Perseverance
Decisiveness	Low anxiety	Empathy	Work well in a team
Function under pressure	Competency in map reading		

C. Problem Statement

The expense of selecting, recruiting, and training an Operational Forces recruit is highly costly and only a low percentage of candidates successfully complete the course. It is therefore important to be able to identify candidates who have the potential to successfully complete Operational Forces training early on in the process. It is also vital to be able to identify candidates with a strong interest in staying within the organisation as retention is crucial considering the high cost of training [13], [14].

The aim of the study is to gain insight into the experiences and opinions of permanent Operational Forces instructors regarding the desired candidate behaviour in addition to specific and unique requirements which will ultimately enable the candidate to become a successful Operational Forces member. The results of this study should provide key characteristics for instructors to look for, which will ultimately allow for candidates with the highest rate of success and highest potential to be selected for training. The study will also provide Operational Forces members with valuable information regarding the improvement of training as well as recruitment and selection procedures.

D. Research Questions

The current study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the desired candidate behaviours and unique requirements of successful Operational Force members?
2. Does the training cycle adequately prepare new recruits for any mission they are assigned to?
3. What can be done to improve the selection and recruitment process to ensure that there is a bigger and stronger pool of candidates to select from?

III. METHODS

The study made use of a mixed methods design. The data collection tool included both open ended and close ended questions to gain a better perspective of the topic under investigation. Mixed method designs are useful as they provide different perspectives on the same topic so that the researcher has a broader view of the topic under investigation [5], [19].

A. Study Participants

Data was collected at two points in time; therefore the study included two samples closely matched on demographics such as age, rank and years of experience. The first round of data was collected on a sample of 52 permanent Operational Forces staff. The second round of data was collected on a sample of 46 Operational Forces staff. The study included a total sample of 98 permanent Operational Forces members. Participants were all between the ages of 24 and 58 (with a mean age of 37.5), with varying ranks and years of experience (1 year- 38 years). Participants were recruited from five different locations at which the Operational Forces members are commonly located in South Africa. The race distributions of the combined two groups were as follows; 48 black, 13 white, 4 coloured, 1 Khoisan and 31 participants omitted to fill in their race. The sample was selected through a process of convenient sampling matched on specific criteria [19].

B. Data Collection Tool

The data collection tool which was used in this study was a questionnaire which included both close and open ended questions. While they are generally more popular with quantitative research, questionnaires can be equally as useful for collecting qualitative data. Qualitative questionnaires compared to interviews significantly reduce interviewer bias since there are no verbal or visual clues that could influence the participant. Qualitative questionnaires are often used to gather facts about people's feelings, beliefs, opinions, activities and even their experiences within their job. A well designed qualitative questionnaire is designed in a way that allows the participants the freedom to express their view in response to a question without any influence from the interviewer. Data gathered in this way is helpful as the researcher will be able to understand how the person feels about a certain issue instead of receiving a yes or no answer [1], [15].

A self-administered questionnaire was developed specifically for the purpose of this study. A questionnaire was chosen as the data collection tool as it hosts a number of benefits, particularly for the sample being used in this study. Questionnaires are more practical, especially for Operational Forces staff that has busy schedules. As opposed to an interview, the self-administered questionnaire could be completed at any time, making it more convenient. Questionnaires also allow large amounts of data to be collected in a short amount of time. In addition, questionnaires can be carried out by the researcher or by any number of people with limited affect to its validity and reliability [5].

The questionnaire used for this study consisted of three sections, a) an information sheet which indicated the nature and purpose of the study, confidentiality and anonymity agreement and instructions on completing the questionnaire, b) basic demographics (age, rank, race, years of service and location) and c) 10 questions which related to the research questions. The questionnaire included a combination of both open and close ended questions to ensure that adequate

information was received. The 10 questions all aimed to gain a better understanding of the unique requirements expected of a successful Operational Forces recruit, from the perspective of permanent Operational Forces staff.

C. Procedure

A proposal for the current project was submitted to the various ethical channels and approved. The first round of data was collected in 2005 and permission was therefore sought and granted from the researcher to make use of this data. The questionnaire used in 2005 was then replicated and data was collected on another sample in 2015. Data was collected at two points in time (2005 and 2015) to identify whether there has been any shift or change in the requirements of successful Operational Forces members. The printed questionnaires, along with administration instructions and all relevant information regarding the project were given to the head staff members at each of the five respective locations. They were asked to pass along the questionnaires to other staff members to complete and return. All head staff members were given a date by which the questionnaires should be returned. Questionnaires were then collected by the researcher and captured into a database.

D. Data Analysis

The data analysis process was two- fold. The quantitative part lent itself to basic frequencies being calculated in order to establish the dichotomous information needed from certain responses. The qualitative data collected from the questionnaires were captured and later analysed using Atlas-ti. Data was analysed using a thematic analysis to capture the desired candidate behaviour and unique requirements expected of a successful Operational Forces recruit [25]. The analysis process was conducted independently by all three researchers to ensure that the data was rigorously analysed and all avenues explored. The process of analysis was as follows:

- The researchers familiarized themselves with the text in order to identify themes and construct preliminary data codes.
- The data was then analyzed by using ATLAS.ti by each researcher, independently.
- Codes were identified and data was sorted into these codes which ultimately formed the themes which answered the research questions.
- The researchers then collated their data in order to identify whether the themes and codes they found were congruent.
- Final codes and themes were thereafter confirmed and analyzed accordingly

E. Ethical Considerations

Ethical clearance was obtained by the various necessary channels which ensured that the study was ethically sound. All possible precaution was taken to ensure that participants were comfortable and protected when partaking in this study. Participants were well informed about the nature and purpose of the study, and were not required to provide their name on

the questionnaire. The questionnaire was strictly confidential and participants were informed that they did not need to include their name. Questionnaires and all potentially sensitive information were kept strictly confidential and made available to only the researchers. No participant was coerced into participating in this study as participation was completely voluntary [13].

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following section presents and discusses the results obtained in this study. Through the thematic analysis, five primary themes emerged from the data. These five themes were used to help answer the research questions and fulfil the aims of the study:

1. Motivation for joining the Operational Forces
2. Desired candidate behaviours and unique requirements of successful Operational Force members
3. Skills which new recruits are lacking
4. Effectiveness of training cycle to prepare recruits for modern day conflicts
5. Improvement of Operational Forces Recruitment and Selection

A. Theme 1: Motivation for Joining the Operational Forces

‘Motivation is a combination of both desire and energy which is directed at achieving a specific goal. Understanding what motivates people and how to effectively motivate them are key components in any successful career. Motivation can be divided into two components, 1) intrinsic motivation, which has to do with the psychological compensation that the individuals receives from the work and 2) extrinsic motivation, which relates to the economic rewards of the job. Within the South African Operational Forces, identifying what motivates individuals to want to be a part of this elite unit is a fundamental element of the selection process. A great deal of literature points towards the importance of intrinsic motivation in military attrition and retention [21].

Results obtained in the study was consistent between the 2005 and the 2015 samples. It was identified that these participants, who were all already successful members of the Operational Forces shared very similar motivations for wanting to be a part of the Operational Forces. A summary of the motivating factors identified is displayed in Table II.

The results indicates that participants provided more intrinsic factors of motivation rather than extrinsic. ‘Money’ was the only extrinsic factor which participants provided; however, it is important to note that participants who did mention this, also provided a number of intrinsic factors which motivated them. Money alone was therefore not found to be the sole reason participants wanted to be a part of the Operational Forces. Since the literature points toward the importance of intrinsic factors in military attrition and retention [21], it is important for instructors to explore the individual candidate’s motivation for wanting to be a part of this group. In practice, this can be done through a preliminary

interview prior to pre-selection where candidates can be asked what motivated them to want to work in this environment.

TABLE II
FACTORS WHICH MOTIVATED PARTICIPANTS TO JOIN THE OPERATIONAL FORCES

Motivating factor	Direct Quote
Being the best	"I wanted to be the best of the best" "I realised I can be one of the best" "I wanted to be the best, not to be like any other soldier" "The ultimate challenge"
Challenging, exciting and learning new skills	"I was searching for an adventure" "Develop lots of new skills" "Learning skills of a very high standard including leadership"
Childhood dream and exposure to the environment	"I wanted to be a soldier at a very young age. When I was exposed to the army system I wanted to be the best"
A calling	"It is in my blood. It was a calling. Not everybody got called".
The money	"I came from a rural area where there was no jobs" "The money is better than the rest of SANDF"

B. Theme 2: Desired Candidate Behaviours and Unique Requirements of Successful Operational Force Members

With the focus from physical fitness towards the measurements of cognitive and non-cognitive attributes in military personnel increasing, it is imperative that we understand what non-physical factors contribute towards the success of the individual working in this very unique and challenging environment [10]. Participants were all provided with a list of 12 attributes which they were asked to evaluate in terms of its importance in being able to successfully complete the training cycle. The list of attributes included self-motivation, concentration, problem solving ability, ability to function under pressure, cognitive ability, self-discipline, ability to work as part of a team work, self-confidence, adaptability, physical ability, having a safety conscious attitude and English literacy/communication skills. Participants were also able to add any other attributes which they felt was important.

From the results, it was found that over 95% of participants in both samples agreed on the twelve attributes they were presented with as being highly important for individuals who will successfully complete the training cycle and become successful Operational Forces members.

Over and above these twelve attributes, participants in the 2005 sample also believed that the desired candidate would also have a good sense of judgement, a high degree of integrity, be trustworthy, mature, and be both physically and mentally fit for the job. The 2015 sample also reported on the desired candidate being trustworthy, mature and having a high degree of integrity but in addition, reported on a number of other important attributes to consider which included responsibility, leadership skills, accountability, emotional intelligence, influence, stability, passion, commitment, professionalism and flexibility.

Table III provides a summary of the 12 attributes participants agreed on as being important, as well as the additional 13 attributes which they felt should be added.

It was found that at least 8 of these attributes overlapped with previous research, confirming its importance in the military environment. These included maturity, commitment, judgement, self-confidence, adaptability [11], [16], stability, ability to work as part of a team and being mentally/psychologically fit [2], [14]. Table III be used by Operational Forces instructors as a guideline to evaluate whether new recruits have the desired behaviour which will lead to a successful career.

TABLE III
DESIRED CANDIDATE BEHAVIOUR

Adaptability	Self-Confidence	Team Work	Self-disciplined	Stability
Accountability	Integrity	Trustworthy	Mature	Passion
Self-motivator	Concentration	Responsible	Commitment	Professionalism
Emotional Intelligence	Problem Solving Ability	Leadership skills	Good Sense of Judgement	Function under Pressure
Cognitive Ability	English Literacy/Communication Skills	Safety Conscious Attitude	Mentally Fit	Flexibility

C. Theme 3: Skills which New Recruits are Lacking

In 2005, one of the main issues which emerged when discussing the required skills was the lack of basic skills which candidates possessed. Basic skills encompassed aspects such as swimming and shooting skills and posed a grave concern to one participant who stated that they will not deploy with some of the newly qualified operators as weapon accuracy is the main problem. "I will personally not deploy with them if weapon accuracy is required."

Members were also cited as not taking the initiative to learn these basic skills at that they needed to be "spoon fed" and under "constant supervision". Members also stated that the skills recently qualified recruits lacked were "minor tactic drills, discipline and basic swimming". The standard of the skills were also put into question, one member stated that the quality of the skills of the newly qualified recruits have decreased and that the standard is lower. "The skills of the newly qualified operators are of a very poor standard".

When drawing on the skills lacking we need to consider the cultural context. South Africa is a diverse nation with multiple cultural entities. It was illustrated that swimming was a basic skill which some individuals failed to have. Certain South African cultures have an inherent fear of water. In addition, many of the candidates are recruited from rural areas where not much emphasis is placed on swimming. Rural towns are often inland and not coastal therefore resulting in the unfamiliarity of the ocean which is an important component in their training. Although there is no context specific, South African literature available on this topic, a study was conducted in America which concluded that there are differences between White and Black individuals with regard to swimming abilities and skills [8].

With regard to the swimming concern, there needs to be a specific inquiry made into this and a tailor made solution to ensure that this is no longer a challenge. When recruiting the recruiters should try and find people who are already skilled in

swimming. This should be a pre-requisite in the recruitment process.

D. Theme 4: Effectiveness of Training Cycle to Prepare Recruits for Modern Day Conflicts

Theme three discussed the concerns of Operational Force instructors who have found that candidates lack the basic skills such as shooting and swimming when they are recruited. This theme will now discuss whether the training cycle adequately prepares the candidates for modern day conflicts.

Mixed responses were received with regards to the adequacy of the training cycle in preparing new recruits to be able to succeed in any mission they are assigned to. From the 2005 sample, 35% of participants indicated that new recruits do not demonstrate the necessary skills required to be deployed straight after the training cycle. They often *"lack the basic skills needed to function optimally in the environment"*. Majority of the participants (65%) did however agree that the training cycle did adequately prepare new recruits. These participants noted that most new recruits are eager to prove themselves and therefore do whatever it takes. Successfully completing the training cycle thus provided recruits with the adequate skills needed to succeed in any mission. It can be concluded from the 2005 results that the training cycle was effective in preparing recruits for modern day conflicts.

"They demonstrate the required skills and attitude because they went through a proper training from experienced Operational Forces members".

In 2015, similar results were obtained in terms of the frequency of answers regarding the adequacy (59%) or inadequacy of the training cycle (39%). It was however found that a majority of the participants who agreed that the training cycle was adequate, failed to provide reason for why they believed this. Instead, they provide reasons for why the training cycle was not adequate. This could have been from a flaw in the questionnaire or ambiguity in the question and will be addressed in the limitations section. Nevertheless, this was contradictory to the results obtained from the 2005 sample and points towards a possible decline in the standards of training or a substantial shift in the focus of training between the years 2005 and 2015.

From the 2015 sample, 39% of participants pointed out the inadequacy of the training cycle and 59% stated that the training cycle was more than adequate. Reasons given for the inadequacy of the training cycle included the need for more experienced instructors to take charge of training as *"current trainers do not have the skills needed to train the trainee"*. This issue is however one which can be corrected. This would entail assigning the older and more experienced Operational Forces members to take over the training of new recruits rather than the younger Operational Forces members. *"We need the experienced men that have a wealth of knowledge which would be of great benefit to the new recruits"*. Although experience is deemed as being important, it is crucial to also consider this issue from the perspective of the new recruits. New recruits may also view younger Operational Forces

members as a source of motivation, reinforcing that their goals are attainable at such a young age.

The candidates need to be well briefed and given clear goals and objectives before training commences so that they are aware of what is to come. Aspects of training which participants found to be most valuable in preparing them for work in the Operational Forces environment during their own training cycle included fitness training, academic courses, leadership, team building, decision making and problem solving, learning to have a sense of responsibility and discipline. These aspects of training should ideally be focussed on more during the training cycle to better equip candidates with the skills they require to succeed in any mission they are assigned to. Another sub-theme which emerged in the data was with regards to the maturity level of new recruits. Majority of the participants in the 2005 and 2015 sample stated that a lot of the new recruits were not as mature as the recruits of previous years and there were many who were not serious enough about the job. Some of the new recruits were said to be *"immature and making hasty decisions"*. Recruits from 5-10 years ago were generally said to be *"far more matured"* as new recruits now lack responsibility, lack concentration skills, have serious discipline issues, attitude problems and a general lack of respect to their superiors, *"now they have the right to talk back to the trainers"*. Furthermore, there appeared to be general concern particularly in the 2015 sample regarding a drop in the standards of the training cycle in order to increase quantity (i.e. increase the number of new recruits). This is a general organisational concern in South Africa and is not isolated to the defence environment; however it can attribute to the drop in quality. Politically, South Africa is in a transitional stage, placing emphasis on not only racial equality but gender equality as well. This results in pressure being put on the organisation to now also include females in the Operational Forces. While this may sound feasible on paper, this comes with its own set of challenges as illustrated by concerned participants who stated that *"We cannot lower the standard of training because they want to accommodate females in the system"* and *"Standards are dropped because there is too much political interference"*. Although the defence environment cannot be mutually exclusive from the political sphere, we need to be conscious of the influences, but also work on a solution which ensures that members of the organisation remain satisfied and training standard remain high to ensure that *"Only the best of the best get selected"*.

E. Theme 5: Improvement of Operational Forces Recruitment and Selection

In the 2005 sample, responses mainly pointed towards the insufficient attention focused on recruiting candidates for selection. Many participants felt that the recruitment teams were not adequate and stated *"Our recruitment teams are not professional"*. In 2015 participants again stated that the process of recruitment is not adequate as age restrictions are not adhered to and the standard of recruitment and training was both dropped.

It was found that there was a 50-50 split in the 2005 and 2015 samples, with regards to agreeing and disagreeing with the adequacy of attention focussed on recruitment of candidates. It was however found that those who answered the question saying that the recruitment structures are adequate actually provided reasons for why the process was inadequate. Again, this could have been a flaw in the questionnaire or ambiguity in the questions and will be discussed in the limitations.

Participants pointed out that recruitment for the Operational Forces needs to not only be improved but needs to be broadened from just the military so that the skill shortage which they currently face can be effectively addressed. This requires proper planning and preparation in terms of advertising which will that ensure there is a bigger pool of candidates from which the best can be selected. Suggestions for improving the recruitment process included going to visit more schools and informing learners of the opportunities available, talking directly to members of the public/ civilians and giving demonstrations of things which they can expect and promoting the defence and Operational Forces through the media “we can do more like advertising in newspapers, movie theatres (other army’s do this) and improving our recruitment teams”.

V. CONCLUSION

Over and above physical fitness, it has been proven that there are a number of other unique characteristics and traits which are contributing factors in explaining career success of Operational Forces members. The diverse environment comes with its own unique set of challenges and stressors and it is important to ensure that only those with the potential for success will be selected. In this regard, this study fulfilled its overall aim of gaining insight into the experiences and opinions of permanent Operational Forces members regarding the unique requirements to look for in new recruits. Furthermore, the study answered all of the research questions.

Five broad themes emerged from the data. This included motivation, desired candidate behaviour, skills new recruits lacked, effectiveness of the training cycle and improvement of the recruitment and selection procedures. Each of these themes contributed a unique perspective as discussed in the results section. The research findings may help to inform decisions about approaches, practices, and methodologies of the South African Operational Forces Recruitment and Selection process by providing instructors with key characteristics to look for in identifying candidates with the highest potential. The study also provides the Operational Forces with valuable information regarding the improvement of training as well as recruitment and selection procedures.

A. Limitations of the Study

- The questionnaire designed for this study proved to be problematic and could be improved upon. Example: Participants often selected ‘yes’ (i.e. agreeing with a statement) but provided a qualitative answer suggesting

that they disagree with the statement. The questions should be revisited and the language used should be simplified to avoid any ambiguity.

- While it is a requirement of the Operational Forces that staff members be able to speak English and the questionnaires were developed in English based on this, it was evident through the use of language, spelling and grammar that most of the participants were not first language English speakers. While participants were fairly proficient in English and could answer the questions, the researchers fear that some meaning may have been lost in translation.

B. Recommendations for Future Research

- Conduct a full qualitative study using semi-structured interviews with a smaller group of participants. Interviews should preferably be conducted in the participant’s home language to identify whether there are any differences in the way in which they expressed themselves. Interviews were not practical for the current study due to the large sample size as well as the multiple data collection locations.
- Conduct further research focussed on the concept of the ‘whole man’ within the African context, since the main literature is all based on research conducted in the United States.
- The impact of the generation gaps between members in order to establish whether there are any differences in opinion.
- Explore the concept of motivation within the African context.
- Aim to gain a better understanding of the challenge of swimming within the African culture.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This research work was supported by both the Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) and the South African Operational Forces. The authors wish to thank the South African Operational Forces for their full cooperation in this research project. The views expressed in this article are those of the authors and do not represent an official position by the South African Operational Forces.

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Leadership Skills and Attributes. In addition to cultivating a conducive environment that is built on a strong foundation, effective leaders must exhibit specific skills and attributes to achieve the goals of the organization. These traits include excellent communication skills, empathy and emotional intelligence, team-building skills, an understanding of the competitive landscape, strategic thinking, and courage, although this list is by no means exhaustive. More challenging, however, is the development of the personal attributes that are necessary for effective leadership. The next level of leadership is operational. A ship can be used as a conceptual model to illustrate several concepts related to organizational behavior and leadership. The South African Special Forces operators group consists of highly able individuals from different cultural, philosophical and ideological backgrounds. Because success in any challenging life situation and particularly during Special Forces. The data were thematically analysed in order to identify themes and specific attributes and skills associated with a successful career in the Operational Forces. MAIN FINDINGS: A number of themes emerged from the data, each of which contributed to our understanding of the research question. Findings suggest that psychological coping, learning potential and career-related preference information can be used to refine the selection of operational force military candidates. South African immigration law offers a wide variety of temporary residence permits that make living, studying, and working in South Africa possible for foreigners and expats. There are also special permits for retirees who would like to spend their golden years in the country. With the right set of skills, you can also take the initiative and get a work permit for South Africa without having to score a job offer. Highly qualified experts and individuals with particular expertise in their field are always welcome to start working in South Africa! Expat Business Info South Africa. The Big Quest for a Job. If you are not in the fortunate position of being transferred to a South African subsidiary or affiliate of your company, you have to tackle the task of finding a suitable job yourself.