

INTERPERSONAL COMPETENCE AND SUITABILITY FOR THE ARMED FORCES

M. Chaturvedi*

ABSTRACT

Interpersonal relationships provide warmth, caring, support, and collaboration that gives life its excitement and potential for joy and personal fulfillment. The competence in managing the interpersonal relationships can lead to more productive self-enhancing and fulfilling lives. The profession of arms requires an individual to perform in group, irrespective of his appointment and place of posting. The interpersonal competence plays a vital role in dealing with superiors, colleagues and juniors. The present study aimed at assessing the interpersonal competence of the aspirants of the Armed Forces. The sample of study consists of 250 aspirants of Armed Forces in the age range of 21-25 years. Interpersonal competence was measured with the help of 'Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (William Schutz, 1958). The scores of the recommended and not recommended aspirants are compared on various dimensions of interpersonal orientation and the findings of the study are interpreted in the light of available literature.

Key Words: Interpersonal relations, Armed Forces.

* Scientist-F (DRDO), Selection Centre Central, S.I. Lines Bhopal-462001

Interpersonal competence is an enormously broad and encompassing notion. A myriad of constructs and theories are either entailed by this notion or so closely associated with it that they seem indistinguishable. Social skills, communication competence, social intelligence, empathy, assertiveness and a host of other constructs are inextricably associated with the study of competence in interpersonal relations.

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Theories of Interpersonal Relations

The **mindfulness theory** of relationship shows how closeness in relationships may be enhanced. Minding is the "reciprocal knowing process involving the nonstop, interrelated thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of persons in a relationship." (John H. Harvey, J. H., & Pauwels, B. G.; 2009) Five components of "minding" include:

1. Knowing and being known: seeking to understand the partner
2. Making relationship-enhancing attributions for behaviors: giving the benefit of the doubt
3. Accepting and respecting: empathy and social skills
4. Maintaining reciprocity: active participation in relationship enhancement
5. Continuity in minding: persisting in mindfulness

After studying married couples for many years, psychologist John Gottman (2003) has proposed the theory of the "**magic ratio**" for successful marriages. The theory says that for a marriage to be successful, couples must average a ratio of five positive interactions to one negative interaction. As the ratio moves to 1:1, divorce becomes more likely. Interpersonal interactions associated with negative relationships include criticism, contempt, defensiveness, and stonewalling. Over time, therapy aims to turn these interpersonal strategies into more

positive ones, which include compliance, appreciation, acceptance of responsibility, and self-soothing; Similarly, partners in interpersonal relationships can incorporate positive components into difficult subjects in order to avoid emotional disconnection.

People can **capitalize on positive events** in an interpersonal context to work towards flourishing relationships (Gable, S. L., & Reis, H. T.; 2010). People often turn to others to share their good news (termed "capitalization"). Studies show that both the act of telling others about good events and the response of the person with whom the event was shared have personal and interpersonal consequences, including increased positive emotions, subjective well-being, and self-esteem, and relationship benefits including intimacy, commitment, trust, liking, closeness, and stability (Gable, S. L., Reis, H. T., Impett, E. A., Asher, E. R.; 2004). Studies show that the act of communicating positive events was associated with increased positive affect and wellbeing (beyond the impact of the positive event itself). Other studies have found that relationships in which partners responded to "good news" communication enthusiastically were associated with higher relationship well-being (Snyder, C.R., & Lopez, Shane, J.; 2007).

William Schutz (1958) used the term interpersonal to indicate any interaction, real or imagined, occurring between people. He developed the **Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation Behavior (FIRO-B) theory** to aid in the understanding and predicting of how high-performance military teams would work together. He used the term need to describe a psychological condition that, if not satisfied, leads to a state of discomfort or anxiety. In his FIRO-B theory he posited that interpersonal needs could be grouped into three categories: Inclusion, Control, and Affection. The FIRO-B model describes the interaction of these three categories of interpersonal need along two dimensions: expressed and wanted.

Schutz (1993) himself discussed the impact of extreme behavior in the areas of inclusion, control, and affection as indicated by scores on the FIRO-B. For each area of interpersonal need the following three types of behavior would be evident: (1) deficient, (2) excessive, and (3) ideal. Deficient was defined as indicating that an individual was not trying to directly satisfy the need. Excessive was defined as indicating that an individual was constantly trying to satisfy the need.

FIRO-B has been used in various fields to study the impact of these interpersonal needs on the leadership styles. Sayeed, Omer Bin (2010) explored relationships between interpersonal

needs and leadership styles in superior-subordinate context. Interpersonal behaviour defined by inclusion and affection dimensions of FIRO-B related more strongly to participative and nurturant dimensions than task behaviour dimension of leaders, while control expressed behaviour failed to show any relationship with task-orientation. Extroversion based on total scores of expressed components of FIRO-B demonstrated significant influence on task orientation, participative and nurturant leadership dimensions. However, inclusion and affection continued to sustain similar trend of relationship with the participative and nurturant dimensions, whereas control expressed behaviour partly confirmed relationship with task orientation being a fragment of nurturance-task dimension.

Di-Marco, Kuehl and Wims (1975) examined the relationship of leadership style and of interpersonal need orientation to changes in self-reported leadership dimensions for first and second level supervisors (n=467) in a manufacturing company. Pre-post training changes in consideration were found positively correlated with pre-training supervisory development training scale and with the FIRO-B subscale scores except "Expressed Control"

Hurley, Feintuch and Mandell's (1991) study was more concerned with how superior-subordinate appraisal leads to more or less constructive attitude toward each other. For the purpose, 95 small personal development groups of undergraduates were assessed for their interpersonal behaviour. It was observed that the mix of declining appraisals of others with rising self-acceptance moved leaders toward a less constructive interpersonal attitude, perhaps leading to exercise of task dominant behaviour more often than required.

In a more structured military environment, Polley and Eid (1994) investigated 96 Norwegian Naval Cadets who rated 112 of their fellow cadets on interpersonal behaviour and ranked each other as leaders and peers before and after an outdoor training exercise. The analysis revealed that: (1) leaders were chosen on the basis of dominance and conformity, whereas co-workers were chosen on the basis of friendliness; and (2) these criteria were affected by the group's interpersonal context.

Davis SA (2011) examined the impact of project managers' emotional intelligence (EI) on observations of interpersonal competence. The goal was to determine whether EI assessment scores show significant relationships with the interpersonal competency ratings project managers receive. Assessments based on the ability model (Mayer, Salovey, & Caruso, 2002) and mixed

model (Bar-On, 2000) of EI were utilized. Results indicate meaningful relationships with both models and the domains of conflict management and problem solving. The mixed model outperformed the ability model, demonstrating a consistent relationship to all interpersonal domains.

Deniel TL Shek (2015) in a paper emphasized, interpersonal competence as an important component of an effective service leader. The paper focuses on methods of developing students' interpersonal competence, particularly different conflict management strategies and assertiveness skills. Different activities have been designed and incorporated in the paper to facilitate students' active learning and self-reflection. Students are also encouraged to explore their own ways to promote the development of interpersonal competence.

From the above review of studies dealing with varied aspects of interpersonal relations and leadership behaviour in diverse situations, it was hinted upon that interpersonal efficacy is a key factor that needs to be considered for evolving a leadership pattern that produces results. The present study was conducted to identify the interpersonal profile of the potential leaders of Indian Armed Forces.

Aim

To compare the recommended and non-recommended Armed Forces aspirants in terms of their interpersonal competence.

Method and material

Sample

The study was conducted on 250 Armed Forces male aspirants (100 recommended and 150 non - recommended) in the age range of 21-25 years (M= 22.78). This age group was selected because this is an age when the personality is fully developed. The sample was selected based on the purposive sampling method.

Tool

Interpersonal competence was measured with the help of 'Fundamental Interpersonal Relations Orientation-Behavior (William Schutz, 1958). This instrument quickly gathers critical insights into how an individual's needs for inclusion, control, and affection can shape his or her interactions with others. It is a 54 item scale based on (a) Expressed Inclusion (EI) (b) Expressed Control (EC)(c) Expressed Affection (EA)(d) Activity Level (EI+EC+EA)(e) Wanted Inclusion (WI)(f) Wanted Control (WC) (g) Wanted Affection (h) Need Level (WI+WC+WA)(i) Importance of People (EI+WI)(j) Assuming Responsibility (EC+WC), (k) Importance of Affection (EA+WA) and (l) Social Interaction Index (Sum of Expressed and Wanted needs). It is a 6 point scale ranging from 'Usually' to 'Never' with a minimum score of 1 and maximum score of 6 for every statement. The internal consistency reliability co-efficient for each measure ranged from .85 to .96. Test-retest reliability coefficients ranged from .71 to .85 for three different samples reported in the FIRO-B[®] Technical Guide (Hammer & Schnell, 2000). Regarding validity a number of studies have shown the FIRO-B assessment to be related to measures of leadership

Procedure

The test was administered in small groups of 8 to 10 subjects. The subjects were adequately convinced on the purpose of the test to ensure genuine responses from same. The test instructions were explained to the subjects and the doubts raised during the test were clarified. The answer sheets were manually scored and the data was analyzed using 't' test to quantify the difference between the two groups.

Results

Table 1: Comparison of Mean Scores of Recommended and Non Recommended Aspirants on Various Dimensions of Interpersonal Relations.

Dimensions	Groups	Mean	S.D	SED	t
Expressed Inclusion	Recom.	6.94	1.23	.618	3.106**
	Non Recom	5.02	1.67		
Expressed Control	Recom.	4.98	1.42	.719	2.138*
	Non Recom	3.72	2.13		
Expressed Affection	Recom.	4.54	2.56	1.11	.990
	Non Recom	3.64	2.84		
Activity Level	Recom.	16.94	2.23	.819	3.309**
	Non Recom	14.23	1.86		
Wanted Inclusion	Recom.	4.96	1.64	.828	.773
	Non Recom	5.54	2.24		
Wanted Control	Recom.	2.24	1.37	.715	2.651**
	Non Recom	4.23	1.96		
Wanted Affection	Recom.	4.34	2.33	.969	.660
	Non Recom	4.98	2.39		
Need Level	Recom.	10.95	2.18	1.17	2.11*
	Non Recom	15.42	3.24		
Importance of People	Recom.	12.98	2.75	1.249	2.282*
	Non Recom	10.13	3.12		
Assuming Responsibility	Recom.	9.84	4.08	1.497	1.983*
	Non Recom	7.08	3.18		
Importance of Affection	Recom.	8.88	2.81	1.465	.478
	Non Recom	8.18	3.88		
Social Interaction Index	Recom.	32.88	6.41	2.405	2.421**
	Non Recom	28.26	5.23		

*= P<.05, **=P<.01

The results in Table 1 indicate a comparison of mean scores of 100 recommended and 150 non-recommended aspirants on various dimensions of Interpersonal Relations. On Expressed Inclusion mean of recommended aspirants (6.94) is higher than that of non-recommended aspirants (5.02). The t value (3.106) is significant at 0.01 level. On Expressed Control the mean

for recommended aspirants was 4.98 with the mean for non-recommended aspirants being 3.72. The difference was found to be significant at 0.05 level with the t value of 2.138. The difference in mean scores on Expressed Affection was statistically insignificant. Overall the recommended aspirants revealed significantly higher mean scores (16.94) on Activity Level (EI+EC+EA) than the non-recommended aspirants (14.23) with the t value (3.309) being significant at 0.01 level. The mean scores on Wanted Inclusion did not reveal a significant difference between the two groups. In Wanted Control the non-recommended aspirants scored significantly higher (mean=4.23) than recommended aspirants (mean=2.24). The scores on Wanted Affection did not differ between the two groups. Overall scores revealed a higher need level (WI+ WC+WA) of non-recommended aspirants (mean=15.42) than the recommended aspirants (mean=10.95) with the t value (2.11) being significant at 0.05 level. The scores on Importance of People (EI+WI) are in favor of recommended aspirants when compared to their non-recommended counterparts with the t value (2.282) being significant at 0.01 level.. On Assuming Responsibility (EC+WC) mean for recommended aspirants was 9.8 with the mean for non-recommended aspirants being 7.08. The difference was found to be significant at 0.05 level with the t value of 1.983. The difference in mean scores on Importance of Affection (EA+WA) was statistically insignificant. The comparison of mean on overall Social Interaction Index score indicated a significantly higher Social Interaction of recommended aspirants (mean=32.88) than non-recommended aspirants (mean=28.26) with the t value (2.421) being significant at 0.01 level.

Discussion

The recommended aspirants revealed a higher score on expressed inclusion, expressed control and overall activity level than the non-recommended aspirants. In the wanted area the recommended aspirants scored significantly lower than the non-recommended aspirants on wanted control and overall need level. On affection both the groups scored moderately in Expressed as well as Wanted area and the difference was insignificant. This indicates that the recommended aspirants are much more confident, more extrovert, and have higher initiative in making relations than the non-recommended aspirants. They are the people who prefer to give orders rather than taking it. They like to make their own decisions and do not feel comfortable in others deciding for them. Because of their higher initiative and confidence they can assume more responsibility than others.

A theoretical point that needs further elaboration here is that of the interpersonal skills of potential leaders as embodied in the construct of FIRO-B (inclusion, control and affection) that are assumed to influence the constructs of leadership dimensions are fully in confirmation with the previous researches (Kuehl, Di-Marci & Wims 1975, O'Brien & Kabanoff 1981) on the managers. They reported that the managers who establish personal ties, maintain human relations and carry on their networking are those who have strong needs to include themselves into others' activities (inclusion need). Expressing warmth, being open to one self and to the group signify affection need or the need for openness. Setting directions and dominating the group through ideas, conceptual schemes, schedules and programs are indicative of control or domineering need of managers. The inclusion and control needs have emerged as more important in determining the suitability for the Armed Forces than the Affection need, which could be explained by the fact that the Armed Forces look for more of task oriented leaders than participative leaders. The non-recommended aspirants revealed low confidence and dependence on others. They prefer to be led by others and would like others to make decisions for them. Both the groups give equal importance to people and have sufficient warmth for them.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study give us an insight into the interpersonal profile of the potential leaders of Indian Armed Forces as identified at the selection stage with the help of comprehensive selection system. These interpersonal skills are further groomed by the training academies and the units to produce effective leaders for the Armed Forces.

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