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Comparative Analysis of Students' Career Choices in India-is Armed Forces a Prime Career Option for Indian Students

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Abstract: In a student's life, taking the correct decision concerning the right career choice is critical. The career chosen must be in line with the expectations, else will result in a waste of efforts and resources. This article explored factors influencing correct career choice and at finding factors those influence students' career choices and whether youth take a career in the Indian armed forces as a prime option over other career choices. This study used qualitative methods to explore Maslow's motivational theory application to armed forces careers, to find the aspirations, and build a theoretical framework for choices of careers. The study used the purposive sampling method to explore the students' choices. PLS-SEM and Anova (Post-Hock Tu-key tests) are used for data validation and analysis. The research finds armed forces are unable to entice eligible young people to join them as students are not inclined towards a career in the armed forces, in present conditions. The correct decision for the right career choice is important for any student and it has a significant impact on his future life and accomplishments. The wider choices available made it difficult to choose the correct path as intricately interwound influencing factors are plenty. There exists an imperative need and requirement exists to undertake necessary steps by the government to make the armed forces, a front-line choice.

Keywords: Career Choice, Career Path, Job, Student, Armed Forces, Military

Introduction

In a student's life, making the right career choice is critical. The career chosen must be in line with the expectations; otherwise, an inaccurate career decision will result in a waste of individual effort and resources in the wrong direction (Kleine *et al.*, 2021). An early career decision is necessary and policymakers are also through various government as well as private sources encouraging youth to undertake a decision on their profession and become an earning member (Mabel *et al.*, 2020). A good professional decision is also important for any student because it has a significant impact on his future life and accomplishments (Styško-Kunkowska and Kwinta, 2020).

As India undergoes rapid and simultaneous social, demographic, economic, and technical developments, many industries offer diverse opportunities. With the abundance of choices accessible, students can pick from a range of job routes to develop their careers, reflect on their objectives and realize their ambitions. The availability of such broader options has proportionately enhanced youth ambitions, resulting in a paradigm change. With the availability of wider options, choosing the proper path has

become difficult (Kumar, 2019). The influencing factors are plenty and these are intricately interwound as the real occupational world is different and presumably filled with mushy sort of things (Holland *et al.*, 1967). These students, in their adolescent age, plan and prepare themselves for a role and take up a job, that uploads their dignity.

The Rationale of the Study

The Indian Army is the world's third-largest army, having demonstrated its mettle and professionalism in both war and peace. The Army has a diversified working environment, with its own organizational culture and specific difficulties and good leaders are essential to lead the soldiers into the war (Oberoi, 2008; Jayaram, 2020). However, the Indian Army is experiencing a general shortfall (Narang and Goswamy, 2015). Such a shortage is concerning for a country like India, which faces external threats from hostile neighbors as well as internal security issues (Kaur and Pingle, 2018). The top students from prestigious educational institutions lack the motivation to select the armed forces as a career option since they have other avenues available and are more interested in those options.

Relevance of Maslow's Theory to Armed Forces Career

According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, a person's wants must be met in ascending order for them to feel motivated. This means the initial or early goals of the person are considered to be in basic human needs which are outlined in Maslow's Hierarchy of needs (Gajderowicz *et al.*, 2017). The theory is on the premise that every human being is born with certain needs. These needs may be categorized into different levels hierarchically, based on the degree of importance (Kaur, 2013). The fundamental need is categorized as physiological needs and then followed by safety needs, belongingness needs, one's esteem needs, and self-actualization as the final need (PTRanil and Sugathadasa, 2021). As the theory brings out that, one's most basic needs are met, in life, the human being wishes to move upward and with a desire toward more complex needs represented higher in the order of the hierarchy. Physiological needs and safety needs are lower-order requirements in the hierarchy of needs. These are linked to what any company has to offer in terms of pay, perks, and other benefits (Düşünceli *et al.*, 2020).

Armed forces postulate a social-cognitive environment, a set of social norms, that fosters a work ethic, with a defined approach or attitude to work. Under the given circumstances, the Maslow theory's applicability to armed forces manifests in a variety of ways, depending upon the different circumstances. Maslow's theory can throw insights in a similar base for understanding, analyzing the career path of armed forces, and even embarking on this career pathway, with comprehension. "Hence any career pathway, including armed forces career also involves a systemic framework, which connects a series of academic credits, associated credentials, involving work experience, across the way in a learner continuum for every student persona" (Schulte, 2018).

As is well known, a career in the armed services provides substantial financial rewards as well as a sense of pride in one's uniform, all of which contribute to job satisfaction. The career in forces can be considered as fourth in the hierarchy, that is self-esteem. However, there is reason to support that armed forces are unable to entice eligible young people to join them. Choosing a job path is frequently accompanied by pressures of expectation and worries (Narang and Goswamy, 2015).

Literature Review

Career path planning is a lifelong process that requires the correct approach to achieve one's goals and ambitions. When it comes to picking a job path, the financial perks are extremely important (Al-Abri and Kooli, 2018). Career path planning will assist students in determining their long-term objectives and empowering them to develop a clear strategy for achieving these objectives. An appropriate career path entails a candid assessment of

one's qualities, abilities, and interests. An honest self-evaluation of one's talent, and interest and an accurate assessment of one's abilities are necessary to select a suitable or appropriate career path (Watts, 2006).

For students and career counsellors alike, choosing the right career path is always a struggle. As a result, the decision-making process, in choosing a career option, must be thorough and planned in such a way that every student is prepared and involved in long-term career planning (Kemboi *et al.*, 2016). Intrinsic, extrinsic, and intrapersonal factors may also be termed personal and impersonal parameters and are associated with the occupational choice that a person makes (Gokuldas, 2017). These forces are complex in nature and greatly influence factors of a person's initial vocational choices (Holland *et al.*, 1967). These factors pave way for the career path. Such a career path is rewarded if career choice is based on individual personality type (Yvonne and Caldera, 2003). Such career decisions should be taken at the earliest in one's life else decision-making becomes complex as one grows older (Gati and Saka, 2001).

Pride in the Profession Selected as a Career

Career selection involves setting standards and subsequently pursuing personal milestones. Self-regulation plays a very significant role in career choice and choosing a challenging career requires a very strong motivating force. Such force infuses internally, upon taking pride in the career when socio-cognitively (Shane, 2003). Taking pride in one's work means, feeling completely satisfied with the job. An employee who takes pride in his work is a value addition by contributing immensely and providing quality services. Such Professional pride invokes a positive emotion which further exhibits evaluation or self-reflection and attitude of the employee toward one's occupational group. Job dissatisfaction leads to emotional imbalance which can also be termed as emotional dissonance, which may result in emotional exhaustion, depersonalization and long run may lead to professional failure (Grandey, 2000).

Factors Influencing a Person's Professional Path

The ability to determine job skills and associated knowledge that may be necessary, as well as manage the direction of one's career, requires critical and careful planning of one's career path (Frank and Schmidt, 1986). Careful career planning allows us to cope with future career goals by devoting substantial time and effort to them, as well as tracking whether we are on a path or not. This aspect helps us in identifying one's skill set, strengths, and weaknesses and giving midcourse corrections that might be required or finding a suitable alternate career (Al-Abri and Kooli, 2018). These factors are further, made to fit in a three-dimensional framework comprising intrinsic, extrinsic, and interpersonal factors (Akosah-Twumasi *et al.*, 2008; Agarwala, 2008).

Students who are driven by intrinsic factors choose such employment or professions that professionally satisfy them (Kunnen, 2013). Such intrinsic factors are stimulus points relate to job satisfaction, own identity, and recognition in a profession (Richard and Ryan, 2000). Contrary, the students motivated by extrinsic factors are motivated by factors like an advancement in career, fringe benefits associated with the job that has been chosen, and the status of the selected job (Edwards and Quinter, 2011; Richard and Ryan, 2000).

Objectives

To investigate the factors that affect youth career choices and to find a position in the armed forces as a career option.

To comprehend the structure of motivation and the considerations that must be considered when deciding on a career in the armed forces.

To investigate the relation of intrinsic factors, extrinsic factors, and interpersonal factors such as the influence of parents and any such significant others, of the students that influence the decision of career choice is explored.

Hypothesis

H₁: There is no difference when choosing a career as a student and all careers are equally sought

H₂: Male and female students prefer careers in the Armed forces equally

H₃: Students of all streams prefer a career in the Armed forces equally

Research Methodology

Research Design

The choice of a profession is an important part of a late adolescent's identity formation for any student. Identity formation is also a significant developmental role in late adolescence, according to Erikson's life span stage theory (Kunnen, 2013). As a result, career options for this study, sector have been categorized as ICT and Management (Information, Communication, Technology, and Management), BFSI (Banking, Financial Services, and Insurance), Core engineering, Teaching, Entrepreneurship, and Armed Forces career. To obtain the results, a descriptive research method was used and students from colleges in Tamilnadu and Pondicherry (Southern India) were chosen for the analysis. A non-probabilistic approach under purposive sampling has been adopted for the study.

Sample Design

As the populace is a group of people or survey respondents who are to be gathered to collect information on factors to be considered for career choice, the students from various colleges in Tamilnadu and Pondicherry were

selected from the arts, commerce, science, and engineering streams. The sample size is 320 students (male students as 160 and another 160 students of female). The purposive sampling method was used for proportionate participation of both genders. Also, qualitative analysis was used to determine the factors that motivate people to join the Armed forces and take that as a career, qualitative analysis ensures trustworthiness and enhances credibility (Ebadi *et al.*, 2021). As such, interviews of commissioned officers of the armed forces, Associated NCC Officers of NCC, have been conducted. During interviews with senior service members, it was found that young people believe that life in the armed forces is difficult and that the risk to life is greater than in other professions. It demonstrates that physiological and safety requirements are not met in Armed Forces.

An Instrument for Data Collection

A total of 11 factors that determine the individual to choose a particular career choice were investigated and these factors were clustered into three groups, Internal factors, external factors, and intra-personal factors. These factors, are considered determinants based on Maslow's theory and will influence the youth to choose a career as per his needs and motivation towards the career. These factors ensure that human actions were driven and directed to attain the goal (Guo *et al.*, 2019), (Wei, 2015). Internal factors consisted of Job satisfaction, Respect or Pride, Selfless service, and Cultural Identity. The external factors consisted of Future growth, Salary. Perks and Privileges, Status of the profession in society, and Intra-personal factors consisted of Knowledge of the profession or Job being taken as a career, Performing the job, and any Risk as safety concerns. A theoretical model has been established to indicate the relationship of identified factors with career choice. The details are given in Table 1.

Theoretical Model

The theoretical model structure has been framed by using PLS-SEM software. PLS-SEM has been used to construct and show the relations. 'PLS SEM' has been chosen to analyze the factors, that lead to choosing the career option (Memon and Rahman, 2013). SEM depends on creating models, by expressing causal relationships by establishing the links between variables. PLS-SEM has been chosen over CB-SEM, as the Partial Least Square method is widely popular and used in many fields (Kock, 2015). The indicators have made three constructs, in the Formative measurement model. The construct relation (given as Fig. 1 in Black and White) explains the basic relationship of determinants with career choice. Composite reliability that testifies Construct reliability gives out how reliable the intended latent constructs of the measurement model have been verified through the PLS-SEM algorithm and the construct reliability and validity.

The result of Cronbach alpha, Average Variance Extracted (AVE) and Rho-A is less than desired. The result is given in Table 2. The result in the exploratory case has to be at least above 0.6, to be termed satisfactory (Wan Mohamad, 2013), (Awang *et al.*, 2010).

To ensure the model fit validity PLS-SEM has been facilitated with bootstrapping facility, that will draw sub-samples in a very large number from the original data and the model will be estimated from each of the sub-samples. This results in developing a large number of model estimates and each model estimate can be used for standard error computing. In other words, through bootstrapping which is considered a nonparametric procedure, the statistical significance of different PLS-SEM results such as path coefficients, and Cronbach's alpha, can be tested.

Construct Reliability and Data Fitment Check

In the present system, we have used, bootstrapping method to create 10000 subsamples for complete bootstrapping. This means, that 10000 samples are created with each of 320 observations. Hence, each subsample generated has elements equal to the original sample and this reflection method creates an infinite population from a finite sample (Méndez-Suárez, 2021), with 320 observations. Bias-Corrected and Accelerated (BCA) Bootstrap is a very stable method, that produces relatively, very narrow Confidence Intervals (CI). This method does not need computation time to be intensive, further, the skewness and bias which is existed in the bootstrap estimates' distribution have been adjusted (Hair Jr *et al.*, 2014). From this standard error, t-values will be used to determine the significance of each parameter. The t-values have shown the 'p-value as significant (refer to Table 3). Further, Confidence Interval Bias corrected values to be interpreted, taking 95% confidence interval, with original mean should be between 2.5% value to 97.5% value ie $LB = \alpha/2 * 100$ and $UB = (1-\alpha/2) * 100$. The result of the Average Variance Extract (AVE) in conjunction with the "Difference of

estimate between observed statistics and the Bootstrap replicated median" as the correction factor of bias is as per the result given in Table 4. The sample mean is between $= \alpha/2 * 100$ and $(1- \alpha/2) * 100$, that is, between LB and the UB. Hence, confidently can declare that the model is 95% fit, hence confidently proceeded to declare that the model is fit (Streukens and Leroi-Werelds, 2016).

Findings of the Study

The existing model gives out that, the constructs were chosen to lead to the career choice and the data validation is considered perfect. With the variables as chosen factors, we compared the data to know the popular career choice of the chosen sample. The data has been compiled and modelled ANOVA (Post Hoc-Tukey) test, to identify the choice sector for the career. The details given above in Table 5 illustrate that the ICT and management sector has emerged as a priority career choice with a mean of 5.89 (with a standard deviation of 0.38) whereas the Armed forces career is lowest with a mean of 1.28 (with a standard deviation of 0.52). Out of the sample selected, only 5.95% of the youth is inclined towards the armed forces as a prime career choice. It's emerged that the armed forces are not a favorite career choice in comparison to the other career fields selected in the research.

Table 6 gives out that the means are significantly different from each other. Q critic value indicates the significance of means and the armed forces category emerged as least preferred. Hence, The P-value rejects the H_1 : Hypothesis and can be assumed that there is a difference when choosing the career. T-test has been carried out to find Male vs Female students' (Table 7) inclination towards armed forces career and rejects the H_2 : Hypothesis and accepts that there is a gender difference in choosing the armed forces as a career. Further Table 8 gives out the humanities students' comprising Social and Commerce students' inclination vis-à-vis the students of Tech and Science students. The analysis rejects the H_3 : Hypothesis and accepts that there is a difference in choosing the career by different streams of personnel.

Table 1: The details of the constructs (Latent variable)

Determinants	Latent variables	Description of determinants
1. Job satisfaction 2. Respect in society or pride needs 3. Selfless service to the nation 4. Cultural identity	Internal factors	1. Feels happy with the job and contented 2. The respect earned that meets esteem 3. Does the job give him a feeling of self-actualization 4. Does the career chosen is within family or community as a tradition to feel belongingness
1. prospects for growth 2. Salary 3. Perks 4. Status	External factors	1. The future growth higher Position, the job likely to give 2. Does it meet physical and other needs 3. Associated privileges that attract the youth and thus influences option 4. Likely status of the job in society which satisfies self-Esteem.
1. Knowledge of the career 1. Performing the job 3. Risk involved	Intra-personal factors	1. The likely job profile of the career chosen 2. Is the job tough to perform 3. Personal safety and extent of risk involved.

Table 2: Construct reliability validity

	Cronbach's Alpha	rho_A	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Internal factors	0.785	0.785	0.861	0.608
External factors	0.746	0.749	0.840	0.568
Intra_personal factors	0.562	0.567	0.773	0.533
Career choice	0.866	0.882	0.893	0.439

Table 3: Average Variance Extracted (AVE)

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Internal factors	0.608	0.608	0.019	31.992	0
External factors	0.568	0.568	0.021	26.821	0
Intra_pers factors	0.533	0.532	0.022	23.760	0
Career choice	0.439	0.440	0.018	24.531	0

Table 4: Confidence interval bias corrected

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Bias	2.5% = (α) * 100	97.5% = (1- α /2) * 100
Internal factors	0.608	0.608	0.000	0.569	0.644
External factors	0.568	0.568	0.000	0.524	0.607
Intra_pers factors	0.533	0.532	0.000	0.487	0.575
Career choice	0.439	0.440	0.001	0.402	0.473

Table 5: ANOVA: Single-factor

ANOVA: Single-factor

Summary

Groups	Count	Sum	Average	Variance	SD		
[Core Engineering]	320	864	2.700000	1.16363	1.0790		
[BFSI]	320	1500	4.687500	0.34717	0.5890		
[ICT and Mgt]	320	188	5.896800	0.14293	0.3780		
[Teaching]	320	1123	3.509300	1.52969	1.2370		
[Armed forces]	320	409	1.278100	0.27663	0.5260		
[Entrepreneurship]	320	937	2.928100	1.05750	1.0280		
Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-Value		F-crit
Between Groups	4178.89	5	835.777500	1110.03000	0.0000		2.2187
Within Groups	1441.11	1914	0.752932				
Total	5620	1919					

Table 6: ANOVA post hoc-Tukey test nova post hoc-Tukey test

ANOVA post hoc-Tukey test nova post hoc-Tukey test

n	320	Groups	Absolute Average	Q Critic	Significance
df	1914	Core Engineering			
	2.781250	0.010467	YES		
q	3.860000	BFSI	4.70625	0.010467	YES
S ₂ pooled	0.752930	ICT	5.89375	0.010467	YES
Q Critic	Q* $\sqrt{(s^2_{pooled}/n.)}$	Teaching	3.44375	0.010467	YES
	0.010467	Armed forces	1.25000	0.010467	YES
		Entrepreneurship	2.92500	0.010467	YES

Table 7: T-Test: (Male vs Female)

T-Test: (Male vs Female)	2	1
Mean	1.377300	1.1761
Variance	0.388300	0.1460
Observations	159.000000	159.0000
Pooled variance	0.267100	
Hypothesized mean difference	0.000000	
df	316.000000	
T - Stat	3.471600	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.000295	
t -critical one-tail	1.649690	

Table 8: T-Test: Science and tech students vs humanities students

T-Test: For Science and Tech student's vs humanities students	2	1
Mean	1.38993700	1.163522
Variance	0.39129100	0.137648
Observations	159.00000000	159.000000
Pearson correlation	0.02349800	
Hypothesized mean difference	0.00000000	
df	158.00000000	
T- Stat	3.96666600	
P(T<=t) one-tail	0.00005512	
t- critical one-tail	1.65455500	

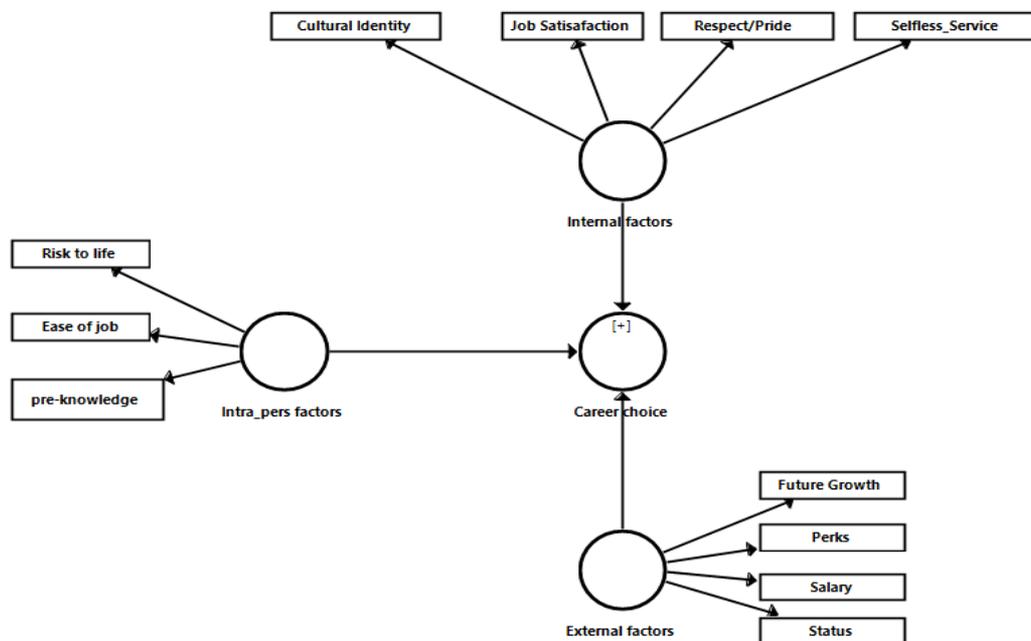


Fig. 1: Relationship of determinants with career choice

Results and Discussion

With the abundance of choices, students can pick from a range of jobs to develop their careers, which results in a paradigm change in social enterprise. The armed forces are the cornerstone and last bastion of any country, and the effectiveness depends on the diverse identities people join to strengthen it and act as a good social enterprise within a framework of democratic setup, rule of law, and respect for human rights. The study indicates that low inclination of youth toward a career in the armed forces. Only 5.95% of students are keen on a career in the armed forces which is lower in order of merit than other career choices taken study (Table 5).

T-test has been carried out to find Male vs Female students' (Table 6) inclination towards armed forces career. The P-value is 0.00029. The critical value is determined with a Degree of Freedom (DF) = 316 with $\alpha = 0.05$. The calculated 't' exceeds the critical value ($t = 3.47 > t \text{ critic } 1.64$), hence the means are significantly different. By conventional criteria, this difference is considered to

be extremely statistically significant and rejects the H_2 : Hypothesis and accepts that there is a gender difference in choosing the armed forces as a career. Further, a T-test has been conducted to understand Humanities students' by combining Social and Commerce students' inclination vis-à-vis the students of Tech and Science students, by combining Science and Engineering students. The details are given in Table 7. The P-Values is 0.000055. The critical value is determined with a Degree of Freedom (DF) = 158 with $\alpha = 0.05$. The calculated 't' exceeds the critical value ($t = 3.96 > t \text{ critic } 1.654$), hence the means are significantly different. This difference is considered to be extremely statistically significant and rejects the H_2 : Hypothesis and accepts that there is a difference in inclination in choosing the armed forces as a career between streams of Humanities and Science & Technology groups. Table 8 gives out the analysis rejects the H_3 : Hypothesis and accepts that there is a difference in choosing the career by different streams of personnel.

The study brings out that the armed forces are not a frontline choice of career option. There is an immediate

requirement to undertake necessary steps by the government to make a career in the armed forces attractive and becomes a front-line choice. One way is enabling co-creation with educational institutes, by facilitating an experiential and co-curricular education and supporting interdisciplinary collaborations for generating armed forces as a favorable option. Here exists an urgent need that, the government should promote this occupational group, to encourage youth to choose this career. State and the students should leverage mechanisms like National Cadet Corps (NCC) to use, create an aligned curriculum, and recognize training needs to support the continuum of available careers in the armed forces. Specially trained professionals should be engaged in a targeted effort to motivate and educate the students and parents about transition and what it signifies to the young adult. Such an effort can potentially enhance students' involvement at the very initial stage.

It's necessary to eliminate all barriers to understand the prospects of each career by the youth and the decision taken. An attractive career option ensures more inflow of human capital and thereby ensures better demographic diversity in the armed forces.

Conclusion

The career choice is an important milestone in students' life as it provides desired lifestyle and defines their status in society. A well-planned career path as such gives to lead a fulfilment of one's life without any conflict in his interests (Kuteesa *et al.*, 2021). This study has been carried out in the southern part of India and the result of the study is limited to this geographical location only, as factors that indeed influence the youths' choices of a profession as a career, depends upon the cultural heritage of that geographical location, in terms of both individual and collectivist cultural settings. Though widespread opportunities exist for the youth to take a career in the armed forces, it is brought out during the research that present-day youth do not consider and do not opt for a career in the armed forces as a frontline option. The participation of youth in the military is essential due to their integrity, influence, and readiness to face any kind of challenge (Medani, 2013).

There is an immediate requirement to undertake necessary steps by the government to make the armed forces a front-line choice. Here exists an urgent need for the government should promote this occupational group, to encourage youth to choose this career. It's necessary to eliminate all barriers to understand the prospects of each career by the youth and the decision taken. An attractive career option ensures more inflow of human capital (Jeffrey and Flory, 2019) and thereby ensure better demographic diversity in the armed forces.

Hence, the findings of this study are useful and aimed at promoting a career in the armed forces among youth as popular and making it a front-line option over other choices available.

Author's Contributions

Thogaram Umasankar: Involved in the evolving of concept and design of frame work. Collected and collated, analysed and interpreted the data. Drafted the entire article.

Rajesh Mahajan: As a guide carried out critical review, advised modifications and approved the final draft into publication version.

Ethics

This article is original and contains unpublished material. The corresponding author confirms that all of the other authors have read and approved the manuscript and no ethical issues involved.

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