



ORIGINAL STUDY



Key personality traits for military excellence: a study on cadets and officers serving in the Italian Army

Tratti chiave della personalità per l'eccellenza militare: uno studio sui cadetti e sugli ufficiali in servizio nell'Esercito Italiano

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Abstract - The selection of military personnel should be as predictive as possible regarding professional success. In this perspective, the present qualitative-quantitative research aims to analyse the personality traits linked to success and failure of cadets and officers on permanent duty, with a view to quality selection and the recruitment system in the military organisation. The study involved 458 senior officers, 28 junior officers and 32 cadets of the Italian Army. There were two main phases: the first involved focus groups and individual interviews; the second involved surveys to define Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other Characteristics. Consistently with scientific literature, the results highlighted three cross-cutting personality traits shared by both cadets and officers: «Values-based Conscientiousness», «Organisational Leadership» and «Selfishness/Work Immaturity».

Riassunto - La selezione del personale militare dovrebbe essere quanto più predittiva possibile riguardo al successo professionale. In questa prospettiva, la presente ricerca quali-quantitativa vuole analizzare i tratti di personalità legati al successo e al fallimento dei Cadetti e degli Ufficiali in servizio permanente, nel quadro di un sistema di selezione e reclutamento di qualità nell'organizzazione militare. Lo studio ha coinvolto 458 Ufficiali Superiori, 28 Ufficiali Inferiori e 32 Cadetti dell'Esercito Italiano. Le fasi principali sono state due: la prima prevedeva focus group e interviste individuali; la seconda prevedeva indagini per definire Conoscenze, Abilità, Capacità e Altre caratteristiche. In linea con la letteratura scientifica, i risultati hanno evidenziato tre tratti trasversali comuni della personalità tra Cadetti e Ufficiali in servizio: «Coscientiosità basata sui valori», «Leadership organizzativa» ed «Egoismo/Immaturità lavorativa».

Keywords: military, selection, recruitment, personality traits.

Key messages:

- A bottom-up approach specific to military forces useful to understand the specificity and uniqueness of Italian Army units.
- Qualitative-quantitative research provides a complete characterisation of an ideal Italian army cadet and officer.

Introduction

The Italian Army constitutes the operational land component of the Joint Military Instrument and, in this capacity,

ensures the defence of the State and its vital interests, contributing to the achievement of international peace and security and the safeguarding of free institutions (1).

Within this framework, the availability of adequate human resources is the first requirement for the service to be able to meet the increasingly complex and extensive challenges at national and

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international level.

The human component is, in fact, the real strength of the military organisation (2), which is why the selection of military personnel must be based on scientific and methodological rigour, consistently with the principles of fairness and transparency (3).

In Italy, the Army's personnel recruitment process, which is complex and demanding (4), aims to select people with above all adequate psychophysical balance and possessing specific personality traits (5,6,7).

In view of the current social, geopolitical, organisational and technological changes and within the framework of the quality selection and recruitment system for military personnel, the aim of this research was to investigate the personality characteristics of success and failure of cadets and officers in permanent service, based on the results obtained within the reference organisational culture. The term 'recruitment' can be understood as the process encompassing the recruitment and selection of personnel within the labour market, aimed at identifying candidates who meet specific requirements to be employed within an organisation (8).

Paying attention to this process enables organisations to enhance human capital as a strategic asset and key factor (9), facilitating processes of innovation and adaptation to new social and/or market contexts (10).

In this regard, in Italy, the recruitment process of military personnel takes place through competitions, as established by the Italian Constitution. Therefore, the careful definition of professional profiles is essential to successfully identify suitable candidates to fill specific organisational positions (11).

In particular, the professional profile is

composed of a list of a priori defined individual characteristics, both objective (e.g. biographical data, education and training, professional requirements) and subjective, including personality traits. In general, it should be reviewed and periodically updated, especially taking into account the organisational, social and technological changes that occur over time (12).

Profile definition is part of job-analysis practices. More specifically, the worker-oriented mode was chosen, aimed at identifying the various characteristics of people fit for performing a given role to the best of their ability (13,14). In this sense, the classic model called KSAOs Knowledge, Skills, Abilities and Other characteristics was used as a reference (15). It refers, in a broader sense, to professional knowledge, to skills engaged in performance, to abilities (e.g. spatial, verbal, synthesis, etc.) and 'other personal characteristics' (e.g. work motivation, emotional states or self-awareness traits such as self-efficacy and self-esteem), which are latent variables, not directly observable.

The qualitative-quantitative research, originally aiming to investigate the characteristics of success and failure of cadets and officers in a perspective of skills and values, followed a bottom-up data collection and processing strategy (16,17), i.e. from cadets up to the top of the Armed Forces. This was done to identify common ground between the two roles and make the selection of cadets as predictive as possible in terms of their future success as officers.

In this regard, although literature provides several anecdotal examples of what the characteristics of a good soldier are (18,19,20), studies aimed at predicting success factors for officers are limited and scarcely exhaustive (21,22).

Particularly in our country, it is necessary to carry out this type of scientific research.

Materials and Methods

This study, promoted by the Military Psychology and Psychiatry Branch of the Army General Staff, and carried out in collaboration with Universities "La Sapienza" in Rome and «Alma Mater Studiorum» in Bologna, developed through two main phases, over a period of about 10 months, from January 2022 to October 2022. Preliminarily, following the instructions of the Army top brass, a research project was drafted and approved defining the various stages and the material to be used (interviews and focus groups) based on a sector-specific bibliography. To guarantee the trustworthiness of research and of the results obtained in the specific military context, a non-theory-driven study methodology was adopted to enhance the specificity of the information, knowledge, opinions and experiences of the personnel involved.

PHASE 1- Focus groups and individual interviews

The first phase took place at the Modena Military Academy. It primarily aimed at carrying out an initial survey to collect the necessary information regarding KSAOs, i.e. to identify the characteristics of success and failure of the Army cadets and officers in terms of skills, competencies and motivational aspects. The collection of information in this phase allowed to define a set of items for the development of the research questionnaire designed to investigate the characteristics of success and failure of the cadets and officers.

28 junior officers and 32 cadets partici-



pated. They were grouped by level of experience and classified into homogeneous groups, differentiated according to their position to facilitate free discussion. In particular, 7 focus groups were carried out, involving a maximum of 8 subjects, comprising: military and civil teachers, Company Commanders, Platoon Commanders and the Military Academy cadets. In addition, 5 individual semi-structured interviews (for senior officers) were carried out with the key elements of the Military Academy itself (Academy, Regiment and Battalion Commanders). The participants, on a voluntary basis, in the focus groups and individual interviews were informed that the purpose of the research was to collect, based on their experience, some information that could allow the definition of the personality and motivational characteristics of success and failure of cadets and officers. Furthermore, that all the information collected would be anonymous, used only for the purposes of the research and that the themes and answers that emerged would be processed in absolute confidentiality.

Data collection tools

Focus group: as homogeneous and structured an instrument as possible, adapted to the target group, characterised by the definition of a maximum time (90 minutes) and developing through the following main phases: introduction (15 minutes), introductory questions (10 minutes), core questions and brief discussion (55 minutes); conclusion (10 minutes), with the definition of instructions and questions for the moderator.

In particular, the core questions were:

- what are, in your opinion, the personality traits that a cadet should have in order to succeed at the Academy?

- what personality traits do you think an officer should have in order to be successful during his/her career?
- what are, in your opinion, the personality characteristics of a cadet that may hinder or lead to failure in the academy?
- what do you think are the personality characteristics of an officer that may hinder or lead to failure during his career?
- what motivates cadets the most to continue their training?
- what motivates cadets the least to continue their training?

Semi-structured or guided interview: as homogeneous and structured an instrument as possible, with a maximum time of 60 minutes and consisting of the following main phases: introduction (10 minutes), introductory questions (5 minutes), core questions (40 minutes), end of interview (5 minutes).

In particular, the essential questions were:

- what are, in your opinion, the personality characteristics that a cadet should have to be successful at the Academy?
- what personality traits do you think an Officer should have to be successful in his/her career?
- what are, in your opinion, the personality characteristics of a cadet that may hinder or lead to failure at the Academy?
- what do you think are the personality characteristics of an officer that may hinder or lead to failure during his/her career?
- In your experience, what motivates cadets the most to continue their training?
- In your experience, what motivates cadets the least to continue their training?

A content analysis was performed on the transcripts of the coded recordings by three psychologist officers: two independent coders and a third comparator.

PHASE 2 - Survey to define KSAOs

The second phase took place at the Army Staff and within various Army bodies/divisions. It consisted in conducting individual interviews with the top echelons of the Army, including some officers as key elements of the Army Staff, and administering the Research Questionnaire.

458 Senior Officers with sound command experience were selected and divided into three main categories according to the bodies in which they serve: operational (183), training (77) and logistics (198) to represent the three main areas of employment. 5 General Officers were selected to represent the institutional leadership. The Psychologist Officer administered the Research Questionnaire in a confidential environment, to 7 groups of about 30 Officers each, on a voluntary basis and in paper form, at their place of duty. Every time, detailed instructions were given, specifying the absolute confidentiality of the information to be collected. The guided interviews were also conducted in a confidential and protected environment. At the end of the interview, the Research Questionnaire was administered.

Data collection tools

The Research Questionnaire (Fig. 2): as details show, it consists of a delivery part, a description of the likert scale for scoring and 79 items, which represent the characteristics and values of success and failure referring to a Cadet (item 1 to item 40) and an Officer (item 41 to item 79).

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Below you will find a list of characteristics and values related to the personality of the **Officer Cadet** and, subsequently, of the **Officer**. On the basis of your experience, please indicate, with increasing values from 1 to 5 (1 = not at all important ÷ 5 = completely important), how important each of them considers to successfully face the training process of the Military Academy of Modena / career as an Officer.

The questionnaire is anonymous. The information contained will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and protected by professional secrecy.

1 Not at all important	2 Unimportant	3 Quite important	4 Very important	5 Quite important
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To successfully face the training process of the Academy, how important do you think it is that an OFFICIAL STUDENT possesses:						
FEATURES	1. Communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
	2. Adaptation	1	2	3	4	5
	3. Extraversion/exuberance	1	2	3	4	5
	4. Ambition	1	2	3	4	5
	5. Openness to new experiences	1	2	3	4	5
	6. Arrogance	1	2	3	4	5
	7. High expectations	1	2	3	4	5
	8. Self-criticism	1	2	3	4	5
	9. Self-efficacy	1	2	3	4	5
	10. Organizational Capacity	1	2	3	4	5
	11. Charisma	1	2	3	4	5
	12. Cooperation	1	2	3	4	5
	13. Courage/boldness	1	2	3	4	5
	14. Conscientiousness	1	2	3	4	5
	15. Difficulty managing stress/anxiety	1	2	3	4	5
	16. Litigiousness	1	2	3	4	5
	17. Egoism	1	2	3	4	5
	18. Energy	1	2	3	4	5
	19. Managing emotions	1	2	3	4	5
	20. Individualism	1	2	3	4	5
	21. Insecurity	1	2	3	4	5
	22. Perseverance towards the goal	1	2	3	4	5
	23. Conceit	1	2	3	4	5
	24. Propensity to learn	1	2	3	4	5
	25. Resilience	1	2	3	4	5
	26. Responsibility/Reliability	1	2	3	4	5
	27. Low motivation	1	2	3	4	5
	28. Superficiality	1	2	3	4	5
	29. Tendency to work alone	1	2	3	4	5
	30. Shyness	1	2	3	4	5
	31. Disorganization	1	2	3	4	5
	32. Empathy/affection	1	2	3	4	5
	33. Emotional tranquility/stability	1	2	3	4	5
	34. Habituality/traditionalism	1	2	3	4	5
VALUES	35. Discipline	1	2	3	4	5
	36. Loyalty	1	2	3	4	5
	37. Respect	1	2	3	4	5
	38. Sense of duty	1	2	3	4	5
	39. Solidarity	1	2	3	4	5
	40. Spirit of sacrifice	1	2	3	4	5

Fig. 2 - Research questionnaire used in the second part of the study.

Specifically, participants were asked to express, based on personal experience, on a scale from 1 (not at all important) to 5 (completely important), how successful or unsuccessful they found the personality traits and values of the questionnaire to be in facing the training process at the Military Academy and the subsequent career in the Armed Forces. This phase was carried out with the support of Armed Force Psychologist Officers serving in Divisions throughout the country.

The semi-structured or guided interview, like the one already described and carried out in the previous phase, was only adapted in relation to the circumstance of use, while maintaining the core questions unaltered.

A descriptive analysis of the items in the research questionnaire was carried out (**Tables 1a and 1b**).

The data gathered in a dataset were sorted according to the characteristics indicated as most successful (mean value > 4) or most unsuccessful (mean value < 1.5), for each of the two parts of the questionnaire (23). Subsequently, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) with oblique rotation (*oblimin*) was conducted using the statistical programme «Jamovi» (2021) (24). The results of the model fit indices were evaluated according to the conventional criteria, i.e. the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) value greater than .9 and the RMSEA value less than .06. Analysis was performed against a conventional statis-

tical significance corresponding to $\alpha=.05$. In addition, to recognise any differences between the characteristics that emerged from the survey, an independent-samples t-test analysis was carried out, which allows the comparison between the individual factors of the first and second part of the questionnaire, i.e. between the KSAOs of Cadets and Officers.

Results

In the first phase of the study, several common issues emerged that were identified as indicators of success by all groups, e.g. self-criticism, charisma, willingness to learn, discipline, loyalty and courage (**Fig. 1**). Conversely, examples of

To successfully face their professional career, how important do they consider it that an OFFICER possesses:						
FEATURES	41. Arrogance	1	2	3	4	5
	42. Self-criticism	1	2	3	4	5
	43. Openness to new experiences	1	2	3	4	5
	44. Extraversion/exuberance	1	2	3	4	5
	45. Communication skills	1	2	3	4	5
	46. Charisma	1	2	3	4	5
	47. Coherence	1	2	3	4	5
	48. Determination	1	2	3	4	5
	49. Education	1	2	3	4	5
	50. Empathy/affection	1	2	3	4	5
	51. Balance	1	2	3	4	5
	52. Be an example	1	2	3	4	5
	53. Being disrespectful	1	2	3	4	5
	54. Being inflexible	1	2	3	4	5
	55. Avoid making decisions	1	2	3	4	5
	56. Leadership	1	2	3	4	5
	57. Motivation	1	2	3	4	5
	58. Propensity for professional updating	1	2	3	4	5
	59. Rationality	1	2	3	4	5
	60. Rigidity in personal relationships	1	2	3	4	5
	61. Knowing how to delegate	1	2	3	4	5
	62. Know how to manage groups	1	2	3	4	5
	63. Distrust of one's collaborators	1	2	3	4	5
	64. Safety	1	2	3	4	5
	65. Litigiousness	1	2	3	4	5
	66. Anxiety	1	2	3	4	5
	67. Reliability	1	2	3	4	5
	68. Disorganization	1	2	3	4	5
	69. Courage	1	2	3	4	5
	70. Humility	1	2	3	4	5
VALUES	71. Discipline	1	2	3	4	5
	72. Fidelity	1	2	3	4	5
	73. Commitment	1	2	3	4	5
	74. Loyalty	1	2	3	4	5
	75. Pride	1	2	3	4	5
	76. Sense of duty	1	2	3	4	5
	77. Sense of responsibility	1	2	3	4	5
	78. Esprit de corps	1	2	3	4	5
	79. Spirit of sacrifice	1	2	3	4	5

Thank you for your precious availability and collaboration!



potential indicators of failure included: *interpersonal difficulties, lack of open-mindedness and difficulties in dealing with stress*. From this initial analysis, the most frequently reiterated issues constituted the items of the questionnaire used in phase 2.

In phase 2, taking a saturation level of 0.3 or higher as a criterion, the results showed 3 factors for both the Cadet's and Officer's characteristics. The three factors, as far as the content of the items is concerned, can be considered very similar (**Tab. 2a and 2b**).

Specifically, the three factors were named as follows:

- Factor 1: *Values conscientiousness* (e.g. item: Sense of duty; Loyalty), by which is meant the predisposition to embrace the ethical values of the Armed Forces, in a scrupulous and

Tab. 1a - Descriptive items for Cadets.

Item	Media	Std Dev.
1. Communication skills	4.13	0.836
2. Adaptation	4.71	0.512
3. Extroversion/exuberance	2.85	0.919
4. Ambition	3.87	0.892
5. Open-mindedness	4.51	0.730
6. Arrogance	1.36	0.771
7. High expectations	3.37	1.057
8. Self-criticism	4.09	0.806
9. Self-efficacy	4.02	0.793
10. Organisational ability	4.50	0.762
11. Charisma	4.11	0.921
12. Collaboration	4.41	0.722
13. Courage/audacity	4.29	0.779
14. Conscientiousness	4.36	0.740
15. Difficulties in dealing with stress/anxiety	2.63	1.769
16. Litigiousness	1.27	0.583
17. Selfishness	1.37	0.714
18. Energy	4.50	0.610
19. Managing emotions	4.29	0.708
20. Individualism	2.10	1.035
21. Insecurity	1.29	0.731
22. Perseverance towards the goal	4.53	0.694
23. Presumption	1.83	1.014
24. Propensity to learn	4.55	0.601
25. Resilience	4.46	0.723
26. Accountability/reliability	4.62	0.660
27. Poor motivation	1.17	0.659
28. Superficiality	1.21	0.687
29. Tendency to work alone	1.94	0.963
30. Shyness	1.64	0.717
31. Disorganisation	1.23	0.683
32. Empathy/affection	3.47	0.953
33. Tranquillity/emotional stability	4.33	0.725
34. Custom/traditionalism	2.50	1.006
35 Discipline	4.69	0.552
36. Loyalty	4.82	0.480
37. Respect	4.75	0.519
38. Sense of duty	4.80	0.460
39. Solidarity	4.26	0.827
40 Spirit of sacrifice	4.74	0.542

Tab. 1b - Descriptive items for Officers.

Item	Media	Std.Dev.
41. Arrogance	1.40	0.782
42. Self-criticism	4.23	0.863
43. Open-mindedness	4.49	0.624
44. Extroversion/exuberance	3.28	0.994
45. Communication skills	4.68	0.525
46. Charisma	4.63	0.611
47. Consistency	4.69	0.598
48. Determination	4.72	0.492
49. Politeness	4.62	0.641
50. Empathy/affection	3.82	0.891
51. Balance	4.65	0.566
52. Setting an example	4.81	0.488
53. Being respectful	1.24	0.840
54. Being scarcely flexible	1.39	0.686
55. Avoiding making decisions	1.20	0.688
56. Leadership	4.63	0.588
57. Motivation	4.70	0.529
58. Propensity for professional development	4.50	0.645
59. Rationality	4.37	0.701
60. Rigidity in personal relationships	1.75	0.867
61. Knowing how to delegate	3.83	0.901
62. Group management ability	4.44	0.642
63. Distrust towards one's co-workers	1.28	0.710
64. Assuredness	4.39	0.649
65. Litigiousness	1.23	0.551
66. Anxiety	1.24	0.602
67. Reliability	4.66	0.653
68. Disorganisation	1.12	0.484
69. Courage	4.40	0.746
70. Humility	4.28	0.845
71. Discipline	4.69	0.549
72. Fidelity	4.74	0.531
73. Commitment	4.75	0.480
74. Loyalty	4.85	0.422
75. Pride	3.90	0.992
76. Sense of duty	4.78	0.474
77. Sense of responsibility	4.85	0.392
78. Esprit de corps	4.58	0.654
79. Spirit of sacrifice	4.73	0.548



OFFICER CADETS			CAREER OFFICERS		
PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS	SELF-CRITICISM	EGOISM	PERSONALITY CHARACTERISTICS	SELF-CRITICISM	PRIDE
	COMINIC ABILITY	ENERGY		COMINIC ABILITY	PROPENSITY FOR PROFESSIONAL UPDATING
	ADAPTATION	EMOTIONAL MANAGEMENT		ARROGANCE	RATIONALITY
	AMBITION	INDIVIDUALISM		CHARISMA	RIGIDITY IN INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS
	OPENNESS	INSECURITY		COHERENCE	KNOWING HOW TO DELEGATE
	ARROGANCE	PERSEVERANCE TOWARDS THE GOAL		COURAGE	KNOWING HOW TO MANAGE GROUPS
	HIGH EXPECTATIONS	RESILIENCE		DETERMINATION	DISTRUST OF ONE'S COLLABORATORS
	SELF-EFFICACY	RESPONSIBILITY		EDUCATION	SAFETY
	ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY	LOW MOTIVATION		EMPATHY	HUMILITY
	CHARISMA	SUPERFICIALITY		BALANCE	
	COOPERATION	TENDENCY TO WORK ALONE		BE AN EXAMPLE	
	COURAGE	SHYNESS		BE DISRESPECTFUL	
	CONSCIENTIOUSNESS			BEING INFLEXIBLE	
	DIFFICULTY MANAGING STRESS			AVOID MAKING DECISIONS	
	RELATIONAL DIFFICULTIES			COMMITMENT	
VALUES	DISCIPLINE		VALUES	DISCIPLINE	
	LOYALTY			FIDELITY	
	RESPECT			LOYALTY	
	SENSE OF DUTY			SENSE OF DUTY	
	SOLIDARITY			SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY	
	SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE			ESPRIT DE CORPS	
				SPIRIT OF SACRIFICE	

Fig. 1 - Characteristics of success and failure of Cadets and Officers in the Army.

Tab. 2a - EFA item results for Officer Trainees.

	Factorial saturation		
	1	2	3
38. Sense of duty	0.790		
40 Spirit of sacrifice	0.699		
36. Loyalty	0.666		
26. Accountability/reliability	0.483		
24. Propensity to learn	0.370		
10. Organisational ability		0.760	
11. Charisma		0.720	
1. Communication skills		0.621	
16. Litigiousness			0.712
17. Selfishness			0.712
6. Arrogance			0.586

Tab. 2b - EFA item results for Officers.

	Factorial saturation		
	1	2	3
76. Sense of duty	0.818		
74. Loyalty	0.731		
79. Spirit of sacrifice	0.681		
58. Propensity for professional development	0.539		
67. Reliability	0.433		
65. Litigiousness		0.653	
41. Arrogance		0.517	
54. Being scarcely flexible		0.404	
45. Communication skills			0.630
46. Charisma			0.415
64. Security			0.360

Factor 1: Values conscientiousness; Factor 2: Organisational leadership; Factor 3: Selfishness/work immaturity.

responsible manner, acting, during one's career, in a manner consistent with them by adopting certain behaviours.

- Factor 2: *Organisational Leadership*

(e.g. item: Charisma; Extroversion), characterised by the officer's skills and traits that determine a responsible, organised and proactive action within the service, aimed at strategi-

cally managing men, materials and means.

- Factor 3: *Selfishness/work immaturity* (e.g. item: Arrogance; Litigiousness), which encompasses person-



ality traits that are not appropriate to the role, undermine relationships and negatively interfere with effective and efficient leadership, also highlighting instability related to low control of emotions.

For these three factors, the TLI index was 0.938 for Cadets and 0.944 for career officers. The RMSEA index was 0.052 for Cadets and 0.0436 for Officers. These values demonstrate good statistical validity of the analysis.

Analysis by independent sample t-test showed that:

- with reference to factor 1 'Values conscientiousness', no statistically significant differences emerged; therefore, adherence to the value set of military identity is to be considered equally important for both Cadets and Officers;
- with regard to factor 2 'Organisational Leadership', a statistically significant difference emerged between the average of Cadets and Officers ($t = 12.634$; $df = 454$; $p < .001$; Mean Diff. 0.35; $d \text{ Cohen} = 0.60$). This can be explained by the fact that leadership is fundamental to the role of an officer in a military context. Conversely, for a Cadet it appears important but in terms of 'leadership aptitude', i.e. as a predisposition to develop this capacity, the effective expression of which is congenial only at the end of the training period, i.e. when the trainee definitively assumes the status of Officer and therefore of Commander of men;
- with respect to factor 3 'Selfishness/work immaturity', the comparison of averages shows no significant differences, suggesting that for both categories aspects of selfishness and immaturity in the work

context are negative factors for career success.

Discussion

By referring to the organisational culture of the Italian Army, the study identified three key factors that link the cross-cutting personality traits (soft skills) of cadets and serving officers. The first two determine success while the third determine unsuccess. These factors are: «Values Conscientiousness», «Organisational Leadership» and «Selfishness/Working Immaturity».

Regarding the first factor, scientific literature reports that conscientiousness, as a personality trait in the Big Five model, was found to be predictive of job performance in both civilian (25) and military (26, 27) samples. More specifically, a survey of 60 young officers who had completed a course found that high conscientiousness was positively correlated with 'planning performance' ($r = .27$) (28). All of this is supported by evidence from existing literature and reinforces the results of the present research.

With regard to the second factor, concerning organisational leadership, research (29) indicates that this area, which can be partly associated to the Extroversion trait of the Big Five model, can also bring added value to these military figures, correlating positively with performance ($r = .16$). These indications from existing literature corroborate the study findings.

Considering the third factor, however, also from the perspective of neuroticism and low emotional stability and in light of the Big Five model, a study carried out in an Indian Military Academy indicates that these constructs are negatively associated with success in military training

(30). The most recent literature confirms validity of the findings of this research, which was carried out in a bottom-up and not theory-driven manner.

Conclusions

In term of relevance, the results of this study, particularly the success factors, had an immediate practical implication. In fact, they were used to revise the profile of the Cadet's personality traits used in the psycho-aptitude selection phase of the recruitment process, which gets to reflect more accurately current reality and is therefore consistent and predictive with respect to the positive performance of a future officer.

The participatory mode of the research also allowed for 'secondary' effects within the institutional context, in particular:

- the participation of the Army top brass, who are in fact the principals of the entire selection process, was a significant opportunity for reflection and the definition of the Army's expectations for future officers, who are to be selected and trained in line with the development and continuous adaptation prospects of the military instrument;
- the involvement of some members of the organisation, such as military teachers, in the profiling process was instrumental in enriching their views on the subject, as well as strengthening their sense of belonging, motivation and responsibility;
- it was possible to initiate scientific analysis of the issues related the psycho-aptitude selection of military personnel to meet actual organisational requirements as far as possible.



Further research, either by enlarging and differentiating the study sample or also using a theory-driven (or mixed) approach, will be necessary to further develop knowledge in this specific field.

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