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How Marine Recruiter Quality and Other Factors Affect Enlistee Quality

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NPS NRP Executive Summary

How Marine Recruiter Quality and Other Factors Affect Enlistee Quality

Period of Performance: 10/16/2020 – 03/31/2022

Report Date: 03/29/2022 | Project Number: NPS-21-M038-A

Naval Postgraduate School, Department of Defense Management (GSDM)



NAVAL RESEARCH PROGRAM
NAVAL POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL
MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

HOW MARINE RECRUITER QUALITY AND OTHER FACTORS AFFECT ENLISTEE QUALITY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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Project Summary

Fostering a high-quality force in the U.S. Marine Corps is essential for readiness, efficiency, and cost-minimization. Given the challenges and demands of recruiting duty, there is a need to identify how the quality of recruiters and other factors might impact the quality of Marine Corps enlistees. The goal of this study is to inform the Marine Corps on strategies to elicit a high-quality force by identifying elements of early intervention, at the recruiting stage. Using data from 2011 to 2019 on individual enlistees and on their recruiters, we use linear probability regression analysis to estimate the relation between recruiter quality, contact modalities, and sources of information and enlistees' quality. After controlling for the recruiting sub-station geographical location and for the fiscal year, the findings of our analysis show that high-quality recruiters are more likely to recruit high-quality enlistees. However, when it comes to recruiting methods used by recruiters or the sourcing of information on recruiting leads, no recruiting modalities or sourcing appear any more likely than the others to generate quality recruits. The findings are robust when accounting for recruiters' rank and for the geographic location of the recruiting stations. Based on the study's findings, we recommend the Marine Corps use performance metrics such as fitness report (FITREPs) in the selection and assignment of Marines in recruiting duty to increase the likelihood of high-quality enlistees joining the force.

Keywords: *enlisted, recruiting, screening, policy, quality, matching, talent management*

Background

The success of the Marine Corps in carrying out its mission depends on the quality of its force. An important ingredient for creating a high-quality force is attracting high-quality recruits, with higher aptitude and internal motivation, but who are also better matches for the Marine Corps. To inform the Marine Corps on strategies to attract a high-quality force, there is a need to better understand the driving forces that contribute to recruiting high-quality enlistees. To respond to this need, this study examines how various factors, particularly the characteristics of the recruiter, predict the quality of enlistees.

This study addresses the following research questions:

1. How does the quality of the recruiter predict various measures of the quality of the enlistee, such as Delayed Entry Program (DEP) attrition and recruit attrition?
2. How do other factors, such as contact modalities and sources of information, predict the quality of enlistees?
3. What policy change in the screening and assignment of canvassing recruiters could lead to higher-quality enlistees and a higher-quality force?

To address the questions, this study uses a multivariate quantitative analysis approach, using manpower/personnel and recruiting data from fiscal years 2011-2019, from the Total Force Data Warehouse (TFDW), Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System (MCRISS), and Manpower Management Records and Performance (MMRP) Branch.



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The working data set includes demographic and professional characteristics for the individual enlistees and for their recruiters. There is no well-established metric of quality for recruiters and for enlistees. Therefore, we explore several quality metrics given data available in the manpower/personnel data system. Specifically, we use individual-level records on enlistees at the time of enlistment, including Armed Forces Qualification Test (AFQT) score derived from the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude and Battery Test (ASVAB), demographic characteristics, level of education, state home of record and the specific recruiting sub-station, recruiting station, and district the individual enlisted from. Additionally, we use data on whether the recruit required waiver(s) and the type of waiver(s), and whether the enlistee attrites during the delayed entry program or during recruiting training. To quantify individual recruiter quality, we use data on their demographic and professional characteristics, such as rank, years of service, military occupation (MOS), and fitness reports (FITREPs).

The generic model for our estimations is

$$Q = \beta_1 * RQ + \beta_2 * X + \epsilon,$$

where Q is a measure of the quality of the recruit, RQ is a measure of the quality (or characteristics) of the recruiter and X is a set of control variables to account for contextual factors, such as station and year.

To estimate the relation between recruiter quality and enlistees' quality, we use linear probability estimations and several high-quality metrics for enlistees, based on AFQT category and waivers data, attrition from DEP and attrition from recruit training. To measure the quality of recruiters, we use metrics such as whether they were in the top third of their peers based on the average cumulative relative value from their FITREPs, rank, MOS, and years of service.

Findings and Conclusions

The findings of our study suggest that an increase in high-quality recruiters is associated with an increase in high-quality enlistees.

Recruiting outcomes may vary by geographical region given that the propensity to serve among the youth also varies by geographical location. Moreover, there may be differences in economic conditions and labor market opportunities from one year to the next that may impact the number and quality of enlistees. Therefore, in our analysis, we account for the recruiting sub-station geographical location and for the fiscal year. The findings of our multivariate quantitative analysis show that high-quality recruiters are statistically more likely to recruit high-quality enlistees. However, the results show no difference in the likelihood of attracting high-quality enlistees by recruiting methods or by the sourcing of information on recruiting leads. The findings are robust after controlling for recruiters' rank and other characteristics.

Based on these findings, we recommend the Marine Corps consider using performance metrics such as fitness report (FITREPs) in the selection and assignment of Marines in recruiting duty to increase the likelihood of attracting high-quality enlistees to join the force. The goal of this study was to inform the Marine Corps on strategies to elicit a high-quality force by identifying elements of early intervention, at



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the recruiting stage. Incorporating FITREP data will require changes to the existing process of assigning Marines to recruiting duty.

Recommendations for Further Research

Fostering a high-quality force in the U.S. Marine Corps is essential for readiness, efficiency, and cost-minimization. Given the challenges and demands of recruiting duty, there is a need to identify how quality of recruiters and other factors may impact the quality of Marine Corps enlistees. While previous studies evaluate the relation between the quality of individual recruiters and the quality of enlistees, recruiting is a team effort. Edison (2007) and Ichniowski and Preston (2014) argue that teams' productivity is positively impacted by an increase in high-quality individuals' share in the team composition. A recommended approach for a future study is to estimate how the quality of enlistees is affected by the change over time in the aggregate skill and experience level of the Marines who perform recruiting duty at the recruiting sub-station level. This approach is similar to that used in Arkes et al. (2020), which evaluates the relationship between work unit composition and performance of first-term enlisted Sailors. This approach can be used to address two different questions: (1) Should the Marine Corps increase the number of career recruiters? and (2) Should the career recruiter MOS be open to more junior ranks, to attract high-quality recruits? The findings would inform the Marine Corps on strategies to elicit a high-quality force by identifying elements of early intervention, at the recruiting stage.

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Acronyms

| | |
|--------|--|
| AFQT | Armed Forces Qualification Test |
| ASVAB | Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery |
| DEP | Delayed Entry Program |
| FITREP | Fitness Report |
| MCRISS | Marine Corps Recruiting Information Support System |
| MMRP | Manpower Management Records and Performance |
| MOS | Military Occupational Specialty |
| TFDW | Total Force Data Warehouse |

