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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the relative degree of association between quality of army life and perceived attributes of different types of leaders. Interviews with one hundred thirty lower ranking enlisted personnel provided information about soldiers' satisfaction with various facets of military experience and their perceptions of the behavior of superiors whom they viewed as either formulating (originators) or merely relaying (givers) daily orders. Regression analyses indicated that satisfaction with both the quality of army life in general and leadership in particular were related more closely to perceived attributes of the originator rather than to such attributes of the giver. This finding is attributed to the originator's greater hierarchical influence within the army structure. (Author)

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Technical Paper 307

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PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER ATTRIBUTES AND SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE

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FOREWORD

The Personnel Accession and Utilization Technical Area of the U.S. Army Research Institute for the Behavioral and Social Sciences (ARI) has among its objectives the improvement of military competence through enhancement of morale and reduction of disciplinary failure. Previous efforts had been designed to provide overall methodology for a wide-ranging program of systematic research as well as specific information on dimensions underlying the idea of discipline in the Army, indicators of the quality of life of enlisted personnel. The efforts were also designed to provide attitudinal and behavioral data on the socialization and adjustment of soldiers to Army life.

This report is concerned with the development of a data base that reflects the social and psychological factors underlying the quality of life in the Army, and that provides, specifically, a set of attitudinal indicators that express how a broad sample of first-term enlisted personnel evaluate the quality of their Army lives. Several of these indicators appear to be predictive of reenlistment intentions.

The research was conducted under Army Project 2Q161102B74E, Basic Research in Social Sciences, FY 1974 Work Program as an in-house effort augmented by contracts with organizations having unique capabilities in the area. Personnel of the Boston Area Academic Consortium, Inc., and the Army Research Institute jointly conducted the present research.

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PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER ATTRIBUTES AND SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE

BRIEF

Requirements:

To discover what characteristics of Army leaders are related most closely to satisfaction of first-term enlisted personnel with the military life in order to learn possible ways to improve the quality of Army life. Thereby more readily to attract and retain personnel for the present volunteer Army. To find out whether any aspects of the quality of Army life are predictive of reenlistment.

Procedure:

A descriptive set of aspects significant to the quality of Army life was first developed through analysis of 76 unstructured in-depth interviews with first-term enlisted personnel. The resulting 16 attitudinal indicators formed the basis for a self-administered questionnaire, in which respondents could mark a 0-100 scale ("satisfaction thermometer") for each of the 16 items, plus a summary item, to indicate their relative satisfaction with each one. Three pretests with 50 soldiers checked that the questions were clear and that all major problems were addressed.

To study the influence of leader attributes, interviews conducted with 130 lower ranking (E1-E4) soldiers provided information pertaining to their perceptions of the attributes of superiors, who the soldiers perceived as either formulating (originators) or merely relaying (givers) their daily orders.

Findings:

A global measure of satisfaction with Army life was used as the primary dependent measure. It correlated highly with a global index that included a number of specific quality of Army life dimensions.

Along all of the quality of military life dimensions, "givers" received higher ratings than "originators." However, the correlations between quality of Army life responses and ratings of leader attributes were higher for originators than for givers. These findings indicate that efforts to heighten morale and satisfaction with military life would be directed more fruitfully toward modifying the behaviors of originators than of givers.

Utilization of Findings:

The satisfaction ratings assigned to the 16 aspects of Army life by enlisted personnel could be used in several ways. The ratings could become a means for periodic monitoring of the quality of Army life as perceived by the soldiers. A particular indicator could be used to evaluate the effectiveness of a program designed to improve an aspect of Army life. Responses to the indicators could be used as an early warning system to identify potential trouble spots in morale and could aid in setting priorities in personnel programs.

If an effort is to be exerted in the area of leadership training, a greater payoff would result from improving the actions of the leader who formulates the duties rather than the one who merely relays the duty orders.

PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER ATTRIBUTES AND SATISFACTION WITH MILITARY LIFE

CONTENTS

	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
METHOD	2
Sample	2
Procedure	2
RESULTS	4
Quality of Army Life	4
Leadership	6
Quality of Army Life and Leader Behavior	8
CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION	9
REFERENCES	13
DISTRIBUTION	15

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Intercorrelations among quality of Army life indexes.	5
2. Mean ratings of originator and giver attributes	7
3. Correlations between the global satisfaction measure and leader attributes	8

PERCEPTIONS OF LEADER ATTRIBUTES AND SATISFACTION
WITH MILITARY LIFE

INTRODUCTION

During the last two decades, much attention has been focused on the relations between certain leader behaviors and subordinate job satisfaction (e.g., Fleishman, 1973). Included among these supervisor attributes is the extent to which supervisors possess technical competence, establish initiating structure, and are considerate of subordinates. One situational condition which may moderate the relations between such leader behaviors and subordinate satisfaction is the extent to which the supervisor possesses hierarchical influence within the organizational structure (House, Filley, & Gujarati, 1971). Pelz (1952) found that workers responded favorably to influential leaders who followed practices generally considered to reflect "good" supervisor behavior, whereas noninfluential supervisors who applied the same techniques often failed to elicit favorable reactions from subordinates.

It has been argued that leaders who possess technical competence, establish initiating structure, and show consideration to subordinates tend to increase the expectations of subordinates regarding important dimensions of the subordinates' job experience (Likert, 1961; Pelz, 1952). These dimensions may involve the quality of working conditions, fringe benefits, promotions, and the like. The fulfillment of such potential outcomes is presumed to be contingent on the ability of leaders to control resources necessary to achieve the desired goals of the work group. Such control is assumed to be derived not only from the supervisor's influence with his immediate superior but also with the supervisor's ability to represent the work unit in the broader organizational system (House et al., 1971). According to this logic, persons of "marginal" organizational status are especially sensitive to their leader's upward influence due to the greater dependence of "marginal" status workers on others to achieve work goals.

It is conceptually relevant to test the relation between leader behavior and worker satisfaction in a military context in view of the hierarchical leadership structure of the Army and the holistic nature of the soldier's work role. A pilot study revealed that enlisted personnel distinguished between leaders according to the soldiers' perceptions of the leaders' responsibility for formulating everyday duties. In particular, some superiors were seen as initiators (originators) while others were perceived as relayers (givers) of daily duty orders. Since the originators held higher positions of authority than the givers, this dichotomy corresponds to two classes of superiors who differ according to their hierarchical influence within the Army structure.

On the basis of previous work, satisfaction with the quality of Army life we predicted to be related to the behavior of both originators and givers. However, the association between satisfaction and originator behavior we expected to be relatively greater than the corresponding relation for the giver. The rationale for the latter hypothesis is that originators would be viewed as having more influence than givers, due to the originators' greater responsibility for determining orders and their higher positions of authority in the Army command. As in previous work (Holz & Gitter, 1974), quality of Army life was defined in terms of the sum of soldiers' positive and negative attitudes regarding the various components of their daily military experiences. In a military organization, quality of life encompasses reactions not only to the work environment but other facets, such as living quarters and food.

METHOD

Sample

The total sample consisted of 130 first-term enlisted men from a combat engineer battalion located in the United States. All respondents received pay at one of the four lowest grades (i.e., E1-E4) and held nonadministrative jobs. The mean age of respondents was about 20 years and average length of service was approximately 18 months. Of the sample, 80% had enlisted, 75% were single, and 80% were Caucasians. While 50% had at least a high school education, only 15% had some college education when they entered the service. Also, respondents were equally divided by the types of community from which they came (i.e., about 25% each from rural areas, small towns, suburbs, and large cities). All soldiers participated individually in 60-minute interviews during which they completed a series of pencil-and-paper tests.

Procedure

Quality of Army Life Items. During the initial part of the interview, subjects were given 17 quality of Army life items which had been used in a previous study (Holz & Gitter, 1974). The instrument included 16 items designed to assess specific dimensions of military service, including organizational climate (e.g., rules and regulations), basics (e.g., food), and fringe benefits (e.g., post facilities) and a single global item that tapped the overall satisfaction of enlisted personnel with Army life. This global measure asked, "All things considered, how satisfied are you with your life in the Army at your present post?" Responses to each of the 17 items were made on a "satisfaction thermometer" which ranged in value from 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 100 (completely satisfied), with 50 representing a neutral point.

Functional Differentiation of Leadership. After completing the quality of Army life items, subjects were asked with the following question to name the originator of their orders: "Who do you think really decides what your daily duties are, or in other words, who actually determines most of the time what your work is?" Subjects also were asked with the following question to identify their giver: "Who tells you what your work will be everyday--that is, who actually gives you your orders?" About 80% of the sample nominated different non-commissioned or commissioned officers as originators and givers, while the rest indicated the same person as both originator and giver. While the givers were mostly either squad leaders (52%) or platoon sergeants (45%), the originators were platoon sergeants (33%), platoon leaders (25%), or company commanders (15%). The perceived impact of both types of leaders on satisfaction was assessed directly by having the subjects estimate what percentage of their perceptions of the quality of Army life was influenced by each type of leader.

Leadership Behavior Scales. A set of 10 scales was administered using first the originator and then the giver as the target person. Eight of these scales were from Stodgill's (1963) Leader Behavior Description Questionnaire--Form XII. These scales were used because they represented the items that loaded highest and second highest on four leadership factors found in previous work (Vaughan, Kriner, & Reaser, 1973). Descriptions of these four factors and their two highest loading items follow:

Task Professionalism factor. Pertains to the provision of structure in terms of scheduling, task allocation, task achievement, communication about task requirements, competency, and a positive approach.

1. Leader establishes and maintains a high level of discipline.
2. Leader is technically competent to perform own duties.

Task-Oriented Consideration factor. Pertains to structure with respect to setting an example, reduction of ambiguity in the work situation, supporting subordinates, and providing positive rewards.

1. Leader backs up subordinates in their actions.
2. Leader is easy to understand.

Person-Oriented Consideration factor. Pertains to exhibiting consideration for members of the group, being concerned for group welfare and morale, and openhanded relations with group members.

1. Leader refuses to explain actions taken.
2. Leader treats people in an impersonal manner, like cogs in a machine.

Personal/Interpersonal Professionalism factor. Pertains to leader's behavior in terms of maintaining functional relationships--vertically and horizontally in the organization--and flexibility in active fulfillment of responsibilities as a leader.

1. Leader seeks responsibility and accepts responsibility for actions taken.
2. Leader is willing to make changes in ways of doing things.

The foregoing factors correspond closely to dimensions identified in earlier industrial (Bowers & Seashore, 1966) and military (Halpin & Winer; 1952; U.S. Army War College, 1971) research. Also, these factors have been related to ratings of "reputation for getting the job done," "receiving recognition for a job well done," and overall leader performance (Downey & Medland, 1974). For each of the eight scales, respondents indicated on a 100-point continuum (ranging from never to always) the frequency with which the leader evidenced the behavior described by the scale. The remaining two scales dealt with the leader's perceived fairness and overall leadership quality. Along these two scales, responses could range from 0 (most negative) to 100 (most positive).

RESULTS

Quality of Army Life

Because the global measure of satisfaction with Army life was used as the primary dependent measure in subsequent analyses, it was important to know which individual components are most and least represented in this measure. Intercorrelations among the 16 specific quality of Army life items and the global measure are given in Table 1. A factor analysis of the 16 individual items was performed using the principal components method to reduce the complexity of the data to a few underlying dimensions. This analysis produced four initial factors (with eigenvalues exceeding unity) which were rotated orthogonally according to the varimax criterion. While one of these factors explained 30% of the variance in the quality of Army life measures, the other three factors combined to account for only 13% of the variance. Thus, only one factor can be considered to have any importance for the present purposes. This factor had high loadings with the following facets of

Table 1

Intercorrelations Among Quality of Army Life Indexes

Indexes	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Getting things done	-	.31*	.40*	.50*	.43*	.18	.40*	.27*	.55*	.40*	.50*	.21	.31*	.31*	.13	.26*	.63*
2. Hair			.18	.44*	.28*	.23	.29*	.22	.34*	.31*	.32*	.08	.13	.25	.00	.28*	.40*
3. Food				.41*	.25	.17	.33*	.31*	.31*	.33*	.35*	.39*	.35*	.19	.38*	.18	.44*
4. Rules and regulations					.47*	.28*	.36*	.27*	.38*	.53*	.50*	.27*	.31*	.29*	.11	.25	.45*
5. Meaningfulness of work						.22	.13	.21	.26*	.26*	.32*	.23	.31*	.26*	.04	.22	.40*
6. Tour of duty							.14	.27*	.13	.24	.23	.14	.28*	.34*	.11	.14	.27*
7. Housing-barracks								.15	.39*	.34*	.37*	.19	.33*	.24	.43*	.40*	.49*
8. Pay									.26*	.17	.21	.18	.12	.29*	.18	.18	.34*
9. Opportunity to get ahead										.39*	.45*	.23	.31*	.22	.27*	.30*	.58*
10. Treatment as individual											.61*	.28*	.30*	.29*	.10	.14	.54*
11. Leadership												.28*	.25	.38*	.20	.28*	.49*
12. Equal treatment													.24	.18	.30*	.21	.18
13. Facilities on post														.27*	.23	.33*	.31*
14. Personal freedom															.15	.37*	.38*
15. Educational opportunities																.33*	.16
16. Medical/dental care																	.33*
17. Overall satisfaction																	

*p<.01.

Army life; (a) being treated as an individual (.63), (b) getting things done (.63), (c) leadership (.63), (d) rules and regulations (.64), and (e) opportunity to get ahead (.55). This factor was labeled Organizational Climate since it seemed to reflect this dimension of Army life as opposed to either basics (e.g., pay) or fringe benefits (e.g., medical/dental care).

If the global satisfaction measure is a representative index of the quality of Army life construct, then it should correlate highly with the items that load on the Organizational Climate factor and also with the factor created from the combined scores on these items. The correlations between the overall measure of quality of Army life ($M = 42.32$, $S.D. = 23.23$) and the five components that comprise the Organizational Climate factor were all above .45 (see Table I). Moreover, the correlation between the global satisfaction item and the Organizational Climate factor was .66 ($p < .001$). These findings indicate that in the present circumstances the global satisfaction measure is most closely identified with the organizational climate of the Army.

Leadership

Two approaches were taken to assess the relation between leader behavior and quality of military life. The direct approach involved asking enlisted personnel to estimate the relative influence of their two leaders on the soldiers' perceptions of the quality of Army life. The indirect approach (correlational) method involved determining the proportion of variance in the global satisfaction measure that was explained by subordinate ratings of both originator and giver behavioral tendencies.

Direct Assessment of Perceived Leader Impact. The mean percentages of estimated impact of originators and givers on the quality of Army life were 32% for each type of leader. The mean percentage for the combined estimated influence of both superiors--53%--did not equal the sum of each taken separately because about 20% of the soldiers had indicated that their originator and their giver were the same person. These results show that enlisted personnel perceive their originator and their giver as exerting equal and substantial influence on the pleasantness of the military experience.

Perceived Behavior of Leaders. Mean ratings along each of the 10 leadership dimensions are presented in Table 2. Inspection of the means indicates that originators were rated less favorably than were givers in terms of all nine specific leader behaviors and the overall evaluation of leadership ability. A univariate t test was performed to compare subordinates' ratings of their superiors in terms of overall leadership quality. The results of this analysis indicated that originators were

evaluated significantly ($p < .05$) less favorably than were givers. It would be inappropriate to perform a series of univariate t tests for statistically comparing ratings of the two types of leaders along the nine specific leadership dimensions, since the number of tests and correlations among the responses would lead to erroneous alpha probabilities (Morrison, 1967). A Hotelling T^2 statistic indicated that the vector of specific originator ratings differed from that of givers ($p < .05$).

Table 2
Mean Ratings of Originator and Giver Attributes

Leadership attributes	Type of leader	
	Originator	Giver
Discipline	67.48	71.12
Knowledgeability	69.00	75.98
Understandability	65.15	69.35
Supportiveness	61.63	71.09
Personal treatment	66.04	73.95
Willingness to explain	59.82	66.27
Willingness to change	57.88	64.23
Assumption of responsibility	69.96	75.00
Fairness	65.81	68.06
Overall quality	63.90	68.98

Quality of Army Life and Leader Behavior

To test hypotheses concerning the nature of the relation between quality of Army life and perceived leader behaviors, correlational analyses were performed. The resulting coefficients between the global satisfaction measure and the 10 leader attributes are shown in Table 3. There were highly significant positive relations between satisfaction and perceived behaviors of the originator ($p < .01$ in all 10 cases). In 8 of 10 cases, significant relations ($p < .05$) also existed between the global satisfaction measure and ratings of the giver's behavior. The more favorable the actions of both leaders, the more satisfied were respondents with their present military circumstances.

Table 3

Correlations Between the Global Satisfaction Measure and Leader Attributes

Leadership attributes	Type of leader	
	Originator	Giver
Discipline	.41**	.23*
Knowledgeability	.35**	.27**
Understandability	.38**	.18*
Supportiveness	.48**	.25**
Personal treatment	.43**	.27**
Willingness to explain	.43**	.16
Willingness to change	.43**	.30**
Assumption of responsibility	.45**	.27**
Fairness	.26**	.11
Overall quality	.52**	.25**

* $p < .05$.

** $p < .01$.

Inspection of the correlations between the global measure and leadership ratings revealed that the coefficients were greater for the originator than for the giver in all cases. A t test for correlated data (Edwards, 1967) compared the relative magnitude of the association between the global satisfaction measure and ratings of overall leadership ability for both types of leaders. The results indicated that the magnitude of the relation between the global satisfaction measure and the perceived ability of the leader was significantly greater ($p < .01$) for the originator than for the giver. A very similar pattern of findings was obtained when responses to a subscale of the quality of Army life instrument--"satisfaction with leadership"--were related to ratings of originators and givers along the 10 leader behavior dimensions. As with the global satisfaction measure of quality of Army life, the correlation coefficients between satisfaction with Army leadership in general and perceived attributes of specific originators or givers were significant and in a positive direction. Moreover, in all of the comparisons the strength of the relation between satisfaction with Army leadership and leader behaviors was greater for originators than for givers.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

In support of the two hypotheses, satisfaction with the quality of both Army life in general and Army leadership in particular was more closely tied to perceived attributes of the originator rather than of the giver, even though behaviors of both leader types were correlated with enlisted personnel's satisfaction. The correlations between satisfaction and leader behaviors could reflect merely methods variance (Campbell & Fiske, 1959) rather than an inherent association between the two variables. That is, because these correlations involved perceptions by the same person, response bias could account for the shared variance between satisfaction and perceptions of leader behaviors. This argument, however, would not be applicable to the major finding that satisfaction is differentially related to attributes of the originator as compared to those of the giver.

The differential magnitude of the relation between satisfaction and the behavior of originators as opposed to givers derives from the originators' greater hierarchical influence within the Army chain of command. Presumably, enlisted personnel perceived their originators as having greater responsibility for establishing the organizational climate in which the soldiers' daily activities occurred. Because organizational climate was related closely to the quality of Army life for the present sample, it is not surprising that behaviors of the originator rather than of the giver are more strongly linked to subordinate satisfaction. Moreover, due to their higher positions of authority in the Army, originators were most likely perceived as having potentially greater control over the acquisition and distribution of resources necessary for satisfying the goals and expectations of their military units.

The direct and indirect methods of assessing the relation between quality of Army life and leader behavior yielded somewhat discrepant findings. Specifically, enlisted personnel estimated that 53% of their perceptions of the quality of their Army life was due to the combined and equal influence of their two superiors. However, separate multiple correlations between the global satisfaction measure and (a) the originator leadership scales, (b) the giver leadership ratings, and (c) both sets of measures showed that 27%, 7%, and 29% respectively of the variance was explained. Thus, the combined perceived behaviors of both leaders accounted for only 29% of the variance in satisfaction scores, with originator attributes having a disproportionately greater influence than those of the giver.

Two possible explanations can be offered for the obtained discrepancy between the two methods of analyzing the magnitude of the relation between leader behavior and quality of Army life. First, the correlational approach may have yielded an underestimation because it did not take into account all possible leader behaviors that potentially could be related to the quality of Army life from the perspective of enlisted personnel. Alternatively, the direct estimation of influence may have included other aspects of military life that were highly related to leadership (e.g., the correlation between being treated like an individual and satisfaction with leadership is .61).

It is harder to explain the discrepancy between the two methods in assessing the strength of the relation between overall satisfaction and behaviors of originators as compared to givers. One can speculate that from the view of enlisted personnel, the formulation and the implementation of their orders are two equally important stages in the organizational process by which their daily activities are determined. Thus, using the direct approach, originators and givers were rated as equal with regard to their perceived influence in the resolution of daily duties. On the other hand, the correlational method tapped soldiers' reactions to daily orders in terms of the orders' consequent impact on the quality of their lives. In this regard, the actions of the originators would be more closely linked to the perceived quality of such orders.

The present findings have important implications for policymakers who try to improve the pleasantness of Army life for enlisted personnel. At least for the present sample, quality of Army life is most closely identified with the organizational climate on post. Therefore, efforts to heighten morale and motivation would be directed more fruitfully toward modifying the organizational facets of day-to-day existence rather than either improving the basics (e.g., pay) or providing more fringe benefits (e.g., post facilities). Also, while the behavior of originators was viewed less favorably than that of givers, attributes of the originators are more closely tied to subordinate satisfaction. In other words, the "management" and not the "foremen" play the critical role in determining the nature of the rank and file's military experience.

The inference for policy is clear. If effort is to be exerted in the leadership area, a greater payoff would result from focusing on improving the actions of the leader who formulates the duties rather than the one who merely relays the orders.

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