



## Leadership Qualities of Defence Officers for meeting Present and Future Requirements

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### ABSTRACT

**Objective** – The objective of this study is to find the qualities expected of an officer for meeting present and future requirements of the battle field.

**Methodology/Technique** – The study was conducted by personally visiting all the Service Selection Centres of the Indian Armed Forces. The response of 449 officers were put through SPSS software system and analysed.

**Findings** – The study reveals that though the present set of OLQs is sufficiently acceptable and no quality needs to be deleted, the recommendation is for technical knowledge and ability to train subordinates to be added to meet present and future requirements.

**Novelty** – The study uses original data.

**Type of Paper:** Empirical

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### 1. Introduction

As time passes, society changes according to the evolvement of the environment. Environmental changes occur due to socio-economic and technological changes and modernization. With that, the personality of the people growing up also changes. Thus, when the society experiences change, the selection system for various jobs also need to change. The defence officer's selection system is unique as it is a model that was developed based on the colonial British system of government. The model was adopted immediately after India acquired its independence. Although the system has been revised a number of times, the last being approximately 60 years ago, the question remains at the very basis of selection that is whether the Officer's Like Qualities as noted in the youths, have changed or not. Therefore, there is a need to know if the available qualities in the youth are in synchrony with the present-day requirements and if so, will they be acceptable for the future too?

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At the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, perceptions and innovations have changed the face of the armed forces. However, that has not made the system change the selection system in order to select maximum people and thus compromise on the quality of the officers. Due to long standing borders coupled with extreme geographical and climatic conditions, the defence forces have an onerous task of defending the national territory against any external aggression. The defence forces are also often called upon for aid to assist civil authorities during internal disturbances, natural calamities, maintenance of essential services and in the maintenance of law and order. The demand of the defence forces has increased manifold due to counter insurgency operations in the state of Jammu and Kashmir and in North Eastern region.

To meet the constitutional requirements, the defence forces have to constantly modernize itself and to regularly train and equip itself in facing challenges. Since the officers of the armed forces play a major role in achieving these objectives, the requirement of the armed forces is to select the best youths for the armed forces. “The Moral and Ethical Dimension” by Jayal (2013) concludes that serious and immediate steps need to be taken by the nation for the purpose of strengthening the moral and ethical foundations of the Indian Armed Forces. It is a fact that among other tests that measure intelligence and physical fitness, the Service Selection Boards (SSB’s) tries to screen aspirants based on beliefs in the value systems of the armed forces. These are popularly known as the Officer Like Qualities or OLQs. With the rise of materialism amongst young candidates and the prevalence of corruptions in the organisations, there is a growing need to introduce new OLQs that would focus on gauging the moral and ethical values of the applicants. The system of checking for officer qualities has been in fashion since 60 years ago. Thus, it is time to validate the OLQs to check whether they meet the present and future requirements of today’s world or if there is a need to change them.

Because of this, a greater responsibility lies on the shoulders of the officers posted at the Service Selection Centres in making the best selection of the right candidates. These officers are expected to assess potential candidates who need to have such traits and personality before they can become future officers of the Indian Armed Forces.

The present system of selection in the Armed Forces of India relies heavily on detecting certain traits which individuals must possess. The British model applied thus far, did not fully encompass the Indian requirements and this has put a limitation on the selection process. Moreover, the standard of selection is not fixed or uniform, thus there are bound to have some subjectivity involved.

## **2. The Qualities of an Officer**

An officer in the Indian Armed Forces is expected to be an average person who is smart, intelligent and can remain cool and calm under stress and strain and yet still be able to find simple solutions to complex problems. The right candidate should be sociable and possess good mental and physical stamina. He must be resourceful and totally dedicated and committed to the cause as well. Above all, he must have the courage to lead from the front. This means that the officer is expected to have some special qualities in him to be a leader. These qualities have been defined differently by different authors.

Thompson and Bailey (1993) note that the qualities required of the officer are numerous. It takes an amalgamation of qualities to make an effective officer and the overall mix of the qualities is very much dependent on the role which the officer is expected to play. The selection of officer candidates must look more for potential and trainability rather than raw, developed qualities.

Mills (1995) says that Leadership, Discipline, Loyalty, Intelligence, Integrity; Dedication and Bravery are the fundamental qualities a military leader must possess. In addition, Moore (1996) admits that the officer must have certain essential qualities such as Intelligence, Self- Discipline, Confidence, Physical Fitness and Respect. Patch (1998) also mentions that to understand military leadership one has to know more than what one holds dear. For instance, one must understand one’s individual attributes.

The Field Manual 22-100 of the USA outlines mental, physical and emotional attributes as the complete Army leaders' nature. This is expanded by Langholtz (1998) who states that officers are expected to possess an outstanding level of abstract thinking and he/she needs to be able to lead people under difficult

circumstances. In contrast, Dandekar (2000) says that technical knowledge has made it possible to make the large scale selection procedures more efficient. This is verified by Sethi (2011) who notes that every year, the Officers Training Academy at Chennai and the Indian Military Academy (IMA) at Dehradun, jointly turn out more than 1,200 officers. In the last few years, the profile of most of the new officers has a strikingly common strand—they belong to small towns and villages. Clearly, the Indian Army is becoming more inclusive but some analysts complain that its talent pool is shrinking.

McMunn (2012) mentions that the army literally invests in Lacs of Rupees in the candidate so as to make him an officer. In order to assess the potential of the candidate, the army has to check the candidate against a series of qualities and competencies. These qualities which need to be demonstrated at the SSB include Determination, Resoluteness and Persistency, Unwaveringness, Steadiness and the Ability to overcome most difficulties as well as being Strong willed.

As what Blackhurst (2012) says, the motivational level of officers must be very high. Ram N, (2013) also mentions in a newspaper article that the Services Selection Board has effectively made a comprehensive assessment of the personal attributes of candidates. This is usually referred to as 'Officer-Like Qualities.' The exercise so mentions is also elaborate. It is spread over four to five days. During the selection, potential candidates who will become army officers are expected to possess the following qualities of: Ability to influence groups; Ability to keep secrets; Alertness; Capacity for right and quick decision; Cheerfulness; Communication skills; Cooperation; Courage; Determination; Discipline; Discrimination; Energy; Fairness; Grit for facing challenges; Honesty; Initiative; Innovative mind; Integrity; Intellectual curiosity; Intelligence; Justice and fairness; Liveliness; Loyalty; Maturity; Optimism; Organizational ability; Originality; Physical health; Positive mental attitude; Reasoning ability; Resourcefulness; Self-confidence; Selflessness; Sense of responsibility; Social adaptability; Stamina; Team spirit; Willingness to delegate responsibility; and Willingness to face criticism cheerfully. All of these traits seem endless and demanding.

In addition to the above qualities, Adair (1973) also adds that they also need to possess other qualities such as: Enthusiasm, Confidence, Toughness, Integrity, Warmth and Humility as basic leadership qualities. Fiedler (1967), in following the terminology of Halpin and Winer, (1957), distinguishes between the leader's role of "initiating structure" – specifying ways of achieving group goals and coordinating the activities of the group's members, and "consideration"— motivating group members and maintaining internal harmony and satisfaction. However, Fiedler (1967) finds that it is not meaningful to speak of an effective leader and an ineffective leader. He adds that it would be more adequate to say that a leader can be effective in one situation and not in another.

An industrial survey conducted on the Work Foundation showed that good leaders make the right space for people to perform well with-out having to be watched over. The top ten requirements for leadership behavior as ranked by respondents' include: Showing enthusiasm, Supporting other people, Recognizing individual effort, Listening to individual's ideas and problems, Providing direction, Demonstrating personal integrity, Practicing what he/she preaches, Encouraging teamwork, actively Encouraging feedback and Developing other people.

Others like Sood (2006) says that Socrates (470-399 BC) was perhaps the first to provide us with a comprehensive summation of the qualities of a leader. He said, "The General must know how to get his men their rations and every other kind of stores needed in war. He must have imagination to organise plans, practical sense and energy to see them through, must be observant, untiring, shrewd, kindly and cruel, simple and crafty, a watchman and robber, lavish, and miserly, generous and stingy, rash and conservative." Linking this to the "General Staff Publication-1976" of the Indian army on "Leadership", it can be seen that there were outlines instructing that candidates be equipped with: Alertness, Bearing, Courage, Decisiveness, Dependability, Endurance, Enthusiasm, Initiative, Integrity, Judgement, Justice, Knowledge, Loyalty and Sense of Humour. All these qualities were deemed to be the essential qualities of leaders. Sam adds two more qualities to these: a leader must be lucky and he must be: "A bit of a lad!"

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Role of Service Selection Centres

The Service Selection Centres are required to select suitable candidates who have the potential to learn and can be groomed into capable military leaders. For this purpose, qualities expected of officers which can be judged at the time of the interview, are clearly stipulated. The present officer selection process was implemented by the Services Selection Board (SSB) and it is called the Personality and Intelligence Interview. As an assessment tool, the process can spread over five days. It has scientifically analysed each candidate's potential and compatibility for commission into the Armed Forces of India. The selection is based on a triad system of evaluation and it comprises three different techniques which are applied over a period of four to five days. When these three techniques are applied correctly, they are expected to produce the same results, thus reinforcing the selection process three times over.

As per [www.prepareyourexam.com](http://www.prepareyourexam.com), at the SSB Centre, the first part of the interview is the Psychological Tests which are conducted as follows to test: (a) Intelligence Tests, (b) Word Association Test: (c) Thematic Apperception Test (TAT): (d) Situation Reaction Test (SRT): The second part of the interview contains the Group Testing Officer's (GTO's) Test which is a complete test of one's personality including physical fitness, mental robustness, leadership qualities, planning flexibility, expression, knowledge, argumentative capabilities, etc. In other words, the performance of every candidate is gauged as a member of a group, and leader of the group, so that his/her behaviour as equal, superior or subordinate, is keenly observed and assessed. The group worthiness of a candidate is tested. The GTO's test includes the following six broad sub-tests: Group discussion, Group planning exercise, Group obstacles, Command tasks, Individual obstacles and Lecturette. Finally, the candidate is put through a personal interview wherein practical situations are provided and the candidate is expected to react to them. The essence of the complete interview system is that all three different officers check the same 15 OLQs in three different ways in order to ensure that no unwanted candidate is selected and also no capable candidate gets rejected. As per Indian Armed Forces, these 15 OLQs are given here-in-after.

#### 3.1. Officer Like qualities (OLQs) in the Indian Armed Forces

To select an armed forces officer endowed with so many qualities, the Service Selection Centres have been provided with fifteen OLQs to be checked. It comprises of fewer than four factors as evolved by the Psychological Research Wing (PRW) in 1956. These qualities, under each factor, are as explained below:

##### Factor I: Planning and Organising

- 1) Reasoning Ability: It is the ability of a candidate to understand and grasp the given situation, carry out logical thinking and arrive at a reasonable solution. In this, the assessors look for qualities like receptivity, inquiring attitude, logical reasoning and the ability to see the essentials of a problem.
- 2) Organising Ability. It is the ability of the candidate to make optimum use of available resources in a systematic manner to produce effective results.
- 3) Power of Expression: It is the ability of the candidate to communicate
- 4) The ability to put across one's ideas adequately with ease and clarity. It is basically the logical convincing ability of the individual.

##### Factor II: Social Adjustment

- 5) Social Adaptability: The ability of an individual to adjust himself according to the social environment and with persons and social groups, with special reference to superiors, equals and subordinates. It includes social intelligence, attitude towards others, tact and adaptability.
- 6) Cooperation: It is an individual attitude for willing participation in achieving the group objective. It means joint effort and is coupled with loyalty and integrity of the individual qualities.

Self-less service is the main theme as an individual is expected to rise above personal achievements and work as a committed team member to achieve group aim.

7) Sense of Responsibility: It is the in depth understanding of the responsibilities and the values attached to it. The candidate must know what is expected of him so that he can give his best attention and energy on his own accord without anybody having to remind him about it. For example, if the candidate has not done well in school or college without any valid reason, it may be interpreted as low sense of responsibility because as a student the candidate is expected to study hard and that he failed to understand his responsibility. It also means willing to take the responsibility.

Factor III Social Effectiveness. It includes qualities which are dynamic in nature.

8) Initiative: This means that on his own, the candidate must initiate action and should be able to sustain it till the end. It has four aspects: ability to take the first step, to act first, act in a usually new or a subsequently emerging situation in the right direction and maintaining it.

9) Self Confidence: It is the faith in self to meet stressful and unfamiliar situations.

10) Speed of Decision: It is the ability to arrive at a workable decision quickly. It comprises of two components namely; appropriateness and quickness of the decision.

11) Ability to Influence the Group: It is the ability of the leader to convince the group in a manner that elicits willing support from the group to achieve the objective set by him. Leader must not use force under such circumstances.

12) Liveliness: It is the capacity of an individual to remain cool and calm when faced with difficult situations and still be able to find simple practical solutions and also bring about a cheerful atmosphere to the group.

Factor IV: Dynamic: This factor includes three qualities linked with the limbs or coordination between mind and body.

13) Determination: It is the ability of an individual to put in sustained efforts to achieve the objective in spite of obstacles and set-backs. It implies fixedness of purpose; mental concentration and strength of will. It includes application to work and drive.

14) Courage: The ability to appreciate and take purposive risks willingly. It includes the capacity to keep oneself composed under adverse situations. It also means having the spirit of adventure, an enterprising spirit and willingness to dare or risk a hazard.

15) Stamina: It means the capacity of an individual to withstand protracted physical and mental strain. The emphasis here is on endurance.

#### 4. Research Findings

To verify the necessary attributes so as to create a change in the OLQs, the officers were asked if, in keeping futuristic trends in mind, do they think that it is necessary to have a relook at the present day OLQs for selection as an officer in the armed forces. The results obtained are appended below in the form of a frequency table:

Table 1. Need to relook at OLQs for selection in the armed forces

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Most Necessary	84	18.7	18.7
Just Necessary	67	14.9	33.6
Necessary	205	45.7	79.3
Not Necessary	84	18.7	98.0
No Response	9	2.0	100.0
Total	449	100.0	

As is evident, counting what is seen, 79.3% of the officers recommended that there is a need to have a relook at the present day OLQs for selection in the armed forces, keeping futuristic trends in mind. This also means that present day OLQs are not adequate for future warfare hence, majority of the officers felt the need to have a relook at the OLQs itself.

Instead of straightway asking for change in OLQs, it was necessary to find out the status of the present day OLQs hence, the same set of officers were also asked to rate the present day OLQs for selection of officers in the armed forces on a scale of 0 to 9, with 9 being the best and 1 being the worst.

Table 2. Rating of Present Day OLQs for Selection System

	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Poor (0-1)	1	.2	.2
Below Average (2-3)	10	2.2	2.4
Average (4-5)	51	11.4	13.8
High Average (6-7)	250	55.7	69.5
Above Average (8-9)	145	30.1	99.6
Nil	2	.4	100
Total	449	100.0	

Almost 97.2% officers recommended that the present system is good. The officers have no major issue with the present day OLQs and they also affirmed their faith in the present set of OLQs.

Since the officers felt that present day OLQs are good, it was necessary to probe further so as to further confirm the above observations. Here, the officers were asked whether the present day OLQs for selection in the armed forces as officers' meet the present and future requirements. This time the data collected were put through the ANOVA test and the results are presented in Table 3. The findings clearly support the requirement of changes in the OLQs to meet present and future requirements in terms of keeping the armed forces battle worthy at all times.

Table 3. Present-Day OLQs for Selection of Officers in the Armed Forces Meeting Present and Future Requirements

Present day OLQs meeting present and future requirements		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Squares	F	Sig.
	Between Groups	239.658	4	59.914	31.033	.000
	Within Groups	857.206	444	1.931		
	Total	1096.864	448			

Here, the F is 31.033, but at 95% confidence level, the table value ( $\alpha$ ) is 1.96. Since,  $F \geq \alpha$ , it rejects the idea that present the OLQs selection as officers is meeting the present and future requirements. In other words, present day OLQs need to be relooked to meet present day and future requirements.

If the OLQs are good enough but still need a change, the obvious question which came to mind is whether any OLQ needs to be deleted or added so as to meet present and future requirements. In line with this, the officers were then asked if there is a need to remove any OLQ from the present list of 15 qualities so as to meet present and future requirements. Results are presented in the pie chart below:

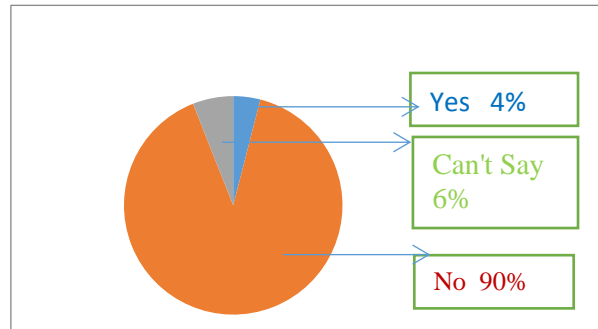


Figure 1. Need to Remove any OLQ from the Existing List

An overwhelming 90% of the officers responded by showing faith in the present list of qualities. It appears that there was no need to replace any quality. This means that the present set of OLQs need to be continued for future use also.

The outcome of the 3.4 above leads to a further confirmation of the findings. The present day officers, like the qualities listed below under the following four factors are illustrated. The 15 officer-preferred qualities were checked at the time of the interview. The officers were also asked if any of these qualities need to be deleted from the list. The response for the individual qualities are shown below. All the officers wanted the present day qualities to continue. They also felt that officers would be required to do similar things in the future too.

Table 4. Relevance of Present Day Officers like Qualities

1	Effective Intelligence	88	10	2	Nil
2	Reasoning Ability	82	12	4	2
3	Organizing Ability	76	14	6	4
4	Power of Expression	84	10	3	3
5	Social Adaptability	80	14	4	2
6	Cooperation	88	6	6	Nil
7	Sense of Responsibility	92	4	4	Nil
8	Initiative	88	4	4	4
9	Self Confidence	80	12	4	4
10	Speed of Decision	74	14	8	4
11	Ability to Influence the Group	72	16	6	6
12	Liveliness	70	14	8	8
13	Determination	86	12	2	Nil
14	Courage	92	4	4	Nil
15	Stamina	86	6	4	4

Taking a cue from 3.4 above, this time the officers were also asked if there is a need to add any quality to the existing list. For this purpose, an open-ended question was given so that respondents could add in any quality they wish to. Response is as given below:

Table 5. Any Addition of Qualities

Quality	Cumulative %age in Favour
Humor	35
Technical Skills	87
Knowledge of any Foreign Language	18
Ability to Train Subordinates	83
Capability to Practice what is Preached	23

The above data indicate that the officers preferred to add technical skills, the ability to train subordinates and the ability to practice what is preached as essential qualities to be added to the existing list.

Senior officers (Major General and above) were also asked for their views about the suitability of present-day OLQs for the selection of potential officers into the armed forces so as to be able to meet the current and future requirements of the force. They were also asked if any quality needs to be added or deleted. The outcome indicate that 25 out of the 30 officers suggested that there is a difference between past, present and future requirements of qualities in the officers. They also said that there is a need to have officers who can fit into the technologically advanced battle field environment and also to adapt to various cultural settings. This is because more and more officers are likely to be deployed to multi-lingual and multi-cultural countries. With regards to the present—day OLQs, the answers given were that the present OLQs need not be disturbed but they agreed that the whole set up needs to be refined and the whole selection process needs to be changed accordingly. They also prefer to include technical knowledge and the ability to train subordinates which were seen as the essential qualities to be added further.

## 5. Conclusion

With the passage of time, every society evolves itself according to the socio-economic changes and technological advancements. Such changes tend to have a direct impact on the qualities of the youths. In India, the OLQs were originally formulated in 1956 and they were good for those times. But since tremendous changes have taken place in the world and youths outlook as well as technology, followed by warfare techniques, there is certainly a requirement for officers in the armed forces to change accordingly. The service to the Nation armed forces of India is unique and the quality of its officers cannot be compromised, Therefore, the Officer's Like Qualities must be given a relook so as to be able to select the right kind of officers for the armed forces.

The armed forces selection system of judging Officer Like Qualities (OLQs) is good. The current OLQs as listed by the Directorate of Psychological Research (DIPR) are also good for the present as well as for the future. There is no need to delete any traits listed in the OLQ. However, three qualities need to be added to the list and these include: technical skills, the ability to train subordinates and the ability to practice what is preached, as essential requirements to keep the present day armed forces under scrutiny. There is also a need to put emphasis on ethical and moral checks as was highlighted during the interview.

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