

Developing Frameworks of Emirati Youth Goals by Understanding Enlistment Propensity and Motivation

Hwee Ling Lim¹, Abdalla Khalid Almaeeni², Abdelaziz Khalid
Almaeeni³, Ahmed Khalid Alzaabi⁴

¹(College of Arts & Sciences, Khalifa University, United Arab Emirates)

²⁻⁴(ADNOC Onshore, United Arab Emirates)

ABSTRACT: The United Arab Emirates (UAE) implemented compulsory national service in 2014 for male Emiratis. When recruits include those who are positively and negatively propensed toward the service, an understanding of the relationship between enlistment propensity and motivations of these youths is vital to improving military recruitment and retention strategies. Hence, this study examined national service enlistment propensities and motivations of Emirati male youths in order to develop Frameworks of Emirati Youth Goals that can shed light on their goals and expectations from the service. Surveys, individual and focus group interviews were conducted with 120 male Emirati high school and college students. Results showed that college participants were more negatively propensed than high school participants which suggests that negative propensity rises with increasing educational attainment. Between group differences were found in the importance of positive propensity motivators. For high school participants, positive propensity motivators are associated with the factors of Benefits and Challenge whereas for college participants, positive propensity motivators are associated with Benefits and Dignity. The findings suggest the need to develop finer Frameworks that reflect the separate needs of different recruits to further understanding of youth goals and support sustainability of the UAE national service program.

KEYWORDS - Enlistment motivators, enlistment propensity, Framework of Emirati Youth Goals, national service, United Arab Emirates

I. INTRODUCTION

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) implemented compulsory national service in 2014 for male Emiratis aged 18 to 30 years old. Implementation of conscription in the UAE was contrary to the worldwide trend towards an all-volunteer force (AVF) that would better meet the modern army's need for soldiers who are also highly skilled technical specialists. The mandatory enlistment of male youths in national service also poses a challenge to the UAE army as it would have to form a cohesive military force from the conscription of the willing and the unwilling. When Emirati youths drafted include those who are positively and negatively propensed toward the service, an understanding the relationship between enlistment propensity and motivations of these youths is vital to improving military recruitment and retention strategies as well as maximizing the potential of these human resources. Hence, this study examines the national service enlistment propensities and motivations of two groups of Emirati male youths (high school and college students) in order to develop Frameworks of Emirati Youth Goals that can shed light on their aims and expectations from the service.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Background to the United Arab Emirates national service program

National service was first implemented in the UAE through the Federal Law No.6 of 2014 on the National Military Service and Reserve Force which required all male Emiratis, aged between 18 to 30 years, who are able-bodied and not eligible for permanent exemption, to undergo national service while it is optional for females. Recruits who completed the service become part of the reserve forces and can be called for further training or duty. Permanent exemptions are available for those who are the only sons of mothers or medically

unfit. Since 2014, the service has undergone several changes. The service duration increased from nine months in 2014 to 12 months (2016) and eventually 16 months (from 2018) for male Emiratis with high school qualifications and above [1]. While a relatively brief nine-month service at the beginning helped recruits and the Emirati community adjust to the concept of the service, the current service length is still shorter compared to countries with established national service histories. In contrast, Israel, Singapore and South Korea's service periods ranged from 30, 24 and 21 months respectively [2-3]. Temporary exemption for male youths (below 29 years old) who wish to defer enlistment in order to enroll in university ended in 2020 when the National Service and Reserve Authority (NSRA); a government body created by the Federal Law No.6, announced that male Emirati high school graduates with grades of 90% or higher who plan to enroll in the university must first complete a four-month basic military training (BMT) course after which they are permitted to commence college studies [4].

Implementation of conscription in the UAE was contrary to the worldwide trend towards a more professional AVF model. The United Kingdom, United States and Germany ended conscription in 1960, 1973, and 2011 respectively [5-7]. However, changing political, economic and social circumstances in the UAE prompted this move. Regional conflicts close to home such as the civil wars in Libya, Syria and Yemen led the UAE to realize the need for a strong defense force and conscription would build a pool of military reservists to defend the country.

The NSRA was tasked with specific economic and social goals to be achieved through conscription: National Education; Workforce Development; and Public Health [8]. The goal of National Education includes strengthening the sense of Emirati identity, understanding of the reciprocal nature of citizenship, and developing positive civic behaviour. The aim of Workforce Development is to instill discipline, work ethic, teamwork, and time management skills that would increase the core competencies needed in work and life and reduce Emiratis' sense of entitlement that stems from their privileged backgrounds. Finally, Public Health is a key objective when obesity rate among Emiratis is high. A 2019 study conducted on 33,000 Emirati men between 18 and 20 years old found that by the age of 29, 71% were overweight or obese [9]. The rigorous in-service training regime that requires recruits to meet military fitness and body weight standards would improve physical fitness and reduce health problems associated with being over-weight.

2.2 National service enlistment propensities and motivations

After ending conscription in 1973 and adopting an AVF policy, the US Department of Defense (DoD) focused on recruiting American youths for the military. From 1975, the US DoD used the Youth Attitude Tracking Study (YATS) to examine enlistment propensity trends for predicting recruitment numbers needed to fulfill military manpower needs, track advertising effectiveness and develop programs to enhance enlistment propensity [10]. Propensity is defined as the likelihood that a youth will enlist in the military in the next few years and the measure of propensity estimate is assumed to predict actual enlistment [11]. Unlike the AVF recruitment condition faced by the US DoD, the UAE has recourse to a steady stream of draftees through national service but the concept of enlistment propensity is relevant in this context. This study defines *enlistment propensity* as the likelihood that an Emirati male youth will enlist for national service in the next few years. It is measured as the preference to defer national service or to enlist as soon as possible. *Negative propensity* is defined as the preference to defer national service enlistment while *positive propensity* is the preference to enlist as soon as possible. The concept of *enlistment motivation* is defined and measured as reasons for the preference to defer or enlist. In the UAE context of conscription where draftees include those who are positively or negatively propensed toward the service, it is important to examine this concept since understanding youth *enlistment motivations (reasons)* can shed light on Emirati youth goals and expectations from the service.

National service, college and employment are life events occurring at overlapping time-frames and affect youth goals since they represent competing alternatives to high school graduates [12]. A 2014 study on the conscription effect in Germany on university degree attainment showed that draft-eligibility raised the probability of completing a degree by 15% [13]. Hence the presence of a military draft tends to increase college completion due to draft avoidance strategy. In the UAE context, since academic deferment was available in 2019 (data collection ended in December 2019 for this study), male Emirati high school youths who would otherwise have sought employment after graduation rather than pursue higher education, may be motivated to

improve their academic performance to qualify for college enrollment and defer national service till after graduation. Moreover, male Emirati college students who otherwise would have dropped out of university may be motivated to persist and complete their degrees to avoid immediate enlistment. Besides affecting education plans, the career goals of male youths could be affected by national service since they lose opportunities for immediate employment after high school or college graduation during the waiting period before enlistment. In 2016, the NSRA clarified that public and private sector employers have the right to reject male Emirati job applicants who have not completed national service unless the latter had been exempted [14]. It should be noted that the change in academic deferment eligibility means that from 2020, most male youths would either have to serve the full 16 months or the four-month BMT course directly after high school graduation.

2.3 Development of a Framework of Emirati youth goals

In 1999, the US DoD reviewed YATS and renamed it Youth Polls [10, 15]. Based on data from the 2001, 2003 and 2004 Youth Polls, Eighmey (2006) identified two major dimensions (Occupational goals; Institutional/Social goals) and factors that consistently appeared in youth goals after conducting Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) [16]. The two dimensions and seven factors were integrated into a framework of youth occupational and institutional-social goals (Table 1). According to [16], *Occupational goals* are extrinsic benefits sought by youths and determined by the job-market. Factors in this dimension reflect material (pragmatic) concerns that are self-directed and include Benefits (salary, job security, skills acquisition that lead to career advancement); Dignity (self-actualization, personal accomplishment, work conditions that respect individuals); Challenge (personal growth from skills development or meeting commitments); and Adventure (exploration of new places and experiences). *Institutional-Social goals* are intrinsic benefits sought by youths and derived from the core values of organizations or society. The factors are other-directed (altruistic), value-driven and include Fidelity (loyalty to mutual goals and others); Risk (exposure to danger that comes with military service); and Family (maintenance of family and social ties).

Table 1. Eighmey's (2006) model [16]

Occupational goals	Institutional/Social goals
Factor	Factor
Benefits	Family
Dignity	Fidelity
Challenge	Risk
Adventure	

Unlike Moskos's (1977) model where institutionalism and occupationalism are treated as opposite ends of a single motivational continuum [17], the occupational and institutional-social goals in Eighmey's (2006) [16] framework are separate dimensions and can function independently of each other. For example, a youth may be motivated to enlist by the factor of Fidelity or a strong sense of patriotism (Institutional goal) and also regard the factor of Benefits in the form of salary (Occupational goal) as important in his decision. Eighmey's (2006) analysis of the Youth Polls data found that value-based factors in Institutional/Social goals (Fidelity, in particular) were important constructs in American male youths' decision to enlist. These findings were consistent with an earlier US study conducted in 2002 which surveyed first-term enlisted soldiers from two infantry battalions [18]. Based on Moskos's model, survey results from 257 soldiers showed that positively propensed participants were strongly motivated by Institutional goals (Patriotism) while negatively propensed participants were more influenced by Occupational goals (Money, Lack of employment options).

To reflect the UAE context, a preliminary framework of Emirati youth goals was developed which utilized the occupational and institutional-social goals dimensions from Eighmey (2006) [16] but reduced the original extensive array of goal items for each factor by removing items that not deemed relevant to the local context such as items referring to race relations. The preliminary framework was first applied in a study that compared enlistment propensities and motivations across three groups of Emirati male youths based on data obtained four months post-implementation of the service law in 2014 [19, 20]. Three groups of participants were surveyed (n=40 per group): high school students aged 16-17 years; university undergraduates aged 18-28 years; and employed/unemployed youths aged 18-28 years. It found that high school students were most negatively

propensed (65%) compared to undergraduates (32.5%) and employed/unemployed youths (47.5%). Also, regardless of propensity, the main factors affecting Emirati youth enlistment decisions were *Benefits*, *Dignity*, *Family* and *Fidelity*. Positively propensed participants were more strongly motivated by the factor of *Fidelity* while negatively propensed participants were more influenced by *Benefits*.

The preliminary framework was later refined and applied in this current study which examined enlistment propensities and motivations across two groups of male youths in order to develop *Frameworks of Emirati Youth Goals*. In this study, the constructs of *enlistment propensity and motivation* are defined and measured as participants' preference to defer national service enlistment (negative propensity) or enlist as soon as possible (positive propensity) and reasons for their choice (motivation). Table 2 lists the main constructs, their definitions and measures used in this study.

Table 2. Constructs and measures in this study

Constructs	Definitions and measures
Enlistment propensity	It is defined as the likelihood that an Emirati male youth will enlist for national service in the next few years. It is measured as the preference to defer (negative propensity) national service or to enlist as soon as possible (positive propensity).
Enlistment motivation	It is defined and measured as reasons for the preference to defer or enlist for national service.

Table 3 shows the *Framework of Emirati Youth Goals* with the two occupational and institutional-social goals dimensions, the factors in each dimension and sets of propensity (positive/negative) motivator items associated with each factor.

Table 3. Framework of Emirati youth goals

Occupational goals	Positive propensity motivators	Negative propensity motivators
<i>Benefits</i>	Nothing better to do Want to develop new job skills Job security, salary, benefits	Want to continue studies Other career plans Need to work after graduation for money
<i>Dignity</i>	Frustration with academic achievement Want to develop self-esteem	----- Training conditions don't respect individuals
<i>Challenge</i>	Want to develop discipline Want to be mentally challenged	Physical challenges in training Regimented military lifestyle
<i>Adventure</i>	Time to change my life / Unhappy with personal living circumstances	Have to adapt to new places and experiences
Institutional/ Social goals	Positive propensity motivators	Negative propensity motivators
<i>Family</i>	Family tradition in the military	Family obligations
<i>Fidelity</i>	Duty to my country Support national defense	----- -----
<i>Risk</i>	----- -----	Threat to life Against my moral / religious beliefs

III. METHOD

Research methodologies are usually categorized as quantitative or qualitative and this study utilized a qualitative research methodology. In this approach, it is believed that knowledge discovered from participant self-reported views towards national service is based on interpretation in a specific time and context, and not held to be generalizable to wider populations but the findings may be extrapolated to similar conditions.

3.1 Sample, instruments and data analysis

This paper presents a subset of findings on Emirati youths' enlistment propensities and motivation from a larger study conducted between 2018 to 2019 which investigated a wider range of constructs. The larger

study was funded by a research grant awarded by the Abu Dhabi Department of Education and Knowledge (ADEK). Purposive sampling was used to identify two groups of Emirati male youths with specific characteristics: Group 1 were high school students (aged 16-17 years) and Group 2 were college students (aged 18-28 years) who are obliged to serve after graduation and unlikely to be permanently exempted from service at the time of data collection. The total sample was 120 with 60 participants in each group. The segmentation of the groups by age and educational status enabled a comparison of views based on the assumption that each group would have different enlistment propensities and motivators which would be reflected in the Framework.

In this qualitative study, both quantitative and qualitative data were collected using three questionnaires (for survey, individual and focus group interviews) that were developed with slight variations of questions. Each questionnaire had the same set of closed questions on demographics and the constructs examined. In each group, 30 participants completed paper-based surveys; 14 participants completed individual interviews and 16 participants completed focus group interviews (4 focus groups). The results presented in this paper are based on the quantitative data from the closed questions in the three questionnaires on the propensity and motivation constructs examined. Quantitative data from closed questions were collated and subjected to simple statistical analysis. The quantitative results are presented as descriptive statistics and graphical representations such as tables and figures.

3.2 Validity standard and ethics

Since this study is based on a qualitative research framework, the standard of validity rather than reliability was used. To ensure construct validity of instruments as the appropriateness of the questions for eliciting the required information, the three questionnaires were piloted prior to full data collection. Feedback from the test participants highlighted difficulties in understanding the questionnaires' instructions and questions worded in English. Hence, the final questionnaires were printed in English and Arabic; and the survey/interview protocols were amended to offer participants the option to communicate with the researchers in either language. These changes ensured participants had access to the language they were most comfortable. To further ensure validity, the researchers received training in survey and interview protocols prior to piloting and full data collection.

The main ethical issues in this study were participant protection, confidentiality, and informed consent. Data collection started in June 2018 till December 2019. Institutional Review Board approval for the study protocol was granted in May 2018 and valid till April 2020. This research did not place participants in physical danger. The questions were not likely to upset or cause harm to participants since they are not based on actual experiences with national service. Confidentiality of identity was ensured by not gathering real names of participants, using codes to replace actual participant names in data processing and publications. Assent was obtained from Group 1 participants since they were minors (below 18 years) and consent was obtained from their parent/guardian. Both parties read, understood and signed an informed assent/consent form (available in English and Arabic) that included the project aims, assurance of confidentiality, assent/consent to voluntary participation and the right to withdraw from participation anytime without penalty. Group 2 participants read, understood and signed a consent form (also available in English and Arabic) that covered the same clauses.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Profile of participants

While all the participants were male Emiratis, Group 1 participants were high school students, aged 16 to 17 years old in 2018/19 which was the period of data collection (Table 4). All were single; 98.2% had an average monthly allowance below US\$5,450; and most expected to graduate within a year (59.6% in 2019). Group 2 were full-time college students, aged 18 to 28 years old in 2018/19. Most were single (98.3%); with an average monthly allowance below US\$5,450 (94.1%); and expected to graduate within one to two years (48.2% in 2019/20).

Table 4. Participant demographics: Group 1 and Group 2

Demographics		Group 1 ¹	Group 2 ¹
Age range	16-17yrs	100%	-
(yrs in 2019)	18-28 yrs	-	100%
Marital status	Single	100%	98.3%

AV monthly allowance ²	Below US\$5,450	98.2%	94.1%
Expected year of graduation	In 2019	59.6%	28.6%
	In 2020	25.5%	19.6%

¹ % based on number of participants Groups 1 and 2: n=60 each; ² 1 USD = 3.67AED (20 Jan 2022).

4.2 Enlistment propensities of Emirati youths

To measure the construct of *enlistment propensity* as the likelihood that an Emirati male youth will enlist for national service in the next few years, participants were asked select their preference to defer enlistment (indicating *negative propensity*) or enlist as soon as possible (indicating *positive propensity*). Fig. 1 shows that although Groups 1 and 2 participants were students enrolled in high school and university respectively, Group 1 participants were more positively propensed (58.3%) compared to Group 2 (28.3%). This result differed from the literature which found that in 2014, male Emirati high school participants were more negatively propensed (65%) than the participants studying in college (32.5%) [20]. It is unlikely that the difference in results was the effect of sampling since the sample size were similar in both studies (n=40 per group in [20]; n=60 per group in this study). However, it is possible that in 2019, most Group 1 participants were positively propensed because of new developments in service policies. Since 2016, employers can reject Emirati job applicants who have not completed national service so job seeking is no longer a viable option for high school graduates who do not qualify for academic deferment [14], thus enlisting directly after high school may be their only alternative.

The finding that high school participants were more positively propensed than college participants suggests a relationship between propensity and educational attainment viz. negative propensity rises with increasing educational attainment. In other words, more educated Emirati male youths are more likely to defer enlistment compared to their less educated counterparts. This result is consistent with the literature where YATS found that under AVF conditions, more educated American youths are less likely to voluntarily enlist in the military than their less educated counterparts [11].

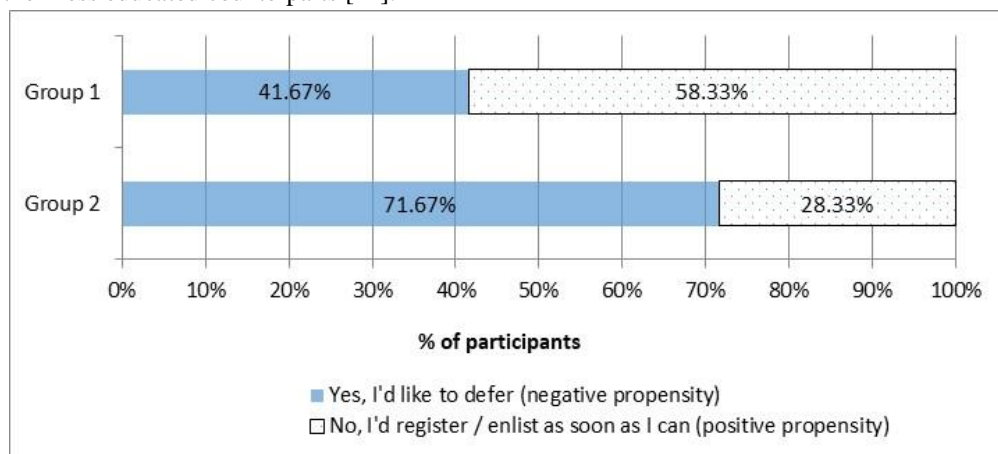


Fig. 1. Enlistment propensities of Groups 1 and 2 in 2019

4.3 Enlistment motivators of Emirati youths

Enlistment motivators are defined as reasons supporting positive or negative propensity preferences. Based on their selected propensity, participants indicated the importance of a set of reasons or motivator items for their choice. For both Groups 1 and 2, the common *main motivators for positive propensity* found were: *Duty to my country*; *Support national defense*; *Want to develop new job skills* (Table 5). In terms of ranking, the high importance given to positive propensity motivators associated with the factor of Patriotism (*Duty to my country*; *Support national defense*) was consistent with the literature and remained stable over time. [18] found that recruits who reported high enlistment propensity before starting military service were largely influenced by

patriotic reasons. Patriotism was also found to be the main factor underlying positive propensity among male Emirati participants in 2014 [20].

The main **motivators for negative propensity** common to both Groups 1 and 2 were: *Want to continue studies; Need to work after graduation for money; Other career plans; Family obligations* (Table 6). Since the top three most important reasons for deferring enlistment for both groups were *Want to continue studies; Need to work after graduation for money; Other career plans*, it suggests that national service, college enrollment and employment are competing alternatives to Emirati youths. Moreover, the participants' preferences to go to college, complete their degrees and seek employment or achieve specific career aspirations could be a manifestation of draft avoidance strategy to avoid immediate enlistment.

While the ranking of the top four most important negative propensity motivators was similar **between groups**, there were differences found in the importance of positive propensity motivators. For **positive propensity**, *Want to develop discipline* (Occupational goal – Challenge factor) was a more important enlistment reason for Group 1 (82.9%) than Group 2 (76.5%). However, *Want to develop self-esteem* (Occupation goal – Dignity factor) was a more important enlistment reason for Group 2 (88.2%) than Group 1 (74.3%). These between group differences in enlistment motivators have implications for the development of Frameworks for Emirati youth goals.

Table 5. Positive enlistment propensity motivators: Groups 1 and 2 in 2019 (ranked by importance)

Positive propensity motivators	Group 1*	Positive propensity motivators	Group 2*
Duty to my country	88.6%	Duty to my country	94.1%
Want to develop discipline	82.9%	Support national defense	94.1%
Want to develop new job skills	80.0%	Want to develop new job skills	88.2%
Support national defense	80.0%	Want to develop self-esteem	88.2%
Want to develop self-esteem	74.3%	Want to develop discipline	76.5%
Job security, salary, benefits	71.4%	Want to be mentally challenged	70.6%
Positive publicity about the military	71.4%	Positive publicity about the military	64.7%
Want to be mentally challenged	71.4%	Job security, salary, benefits	58.8%
Frustration with academic achievement	60.0%	Family tradition in the military	41.2%
Family tradition in the military	60.0%	Time to change my life / Unhappy with personal living circumstances	35.3%
Time to change my life / Unhappy with personal living circumstances	54.3%	Frustration with academic achievement	23.5%
Nothing better to do	48.6%	Nothing better to do	17.6%

*Combined responses for *Most Important* and *Important* points of scale.

Table 6. Negative enlistment propensity motivators: Groups 1 and 2 in 2019 (ranked by importance)

Negative propensity motivators	Group 1*	Negative propensity motivators	Group 2*
Want to continue studies	96.0%	Want to continue studies	90.7%
Need to work after graduation for money	84.0%	Need to work after graduation for money	58.1%
Other career plans	80.0%	Other career plans	55.8%
Family obligations	64.0%	Family obligations	34.9%
Have to adapt to new places and experiences	64.0%	Physical challenges in training	23.3%
Regimented military lifestyle	60.0%	Training conditions don't respect individuals	23.3%
Physical challenges in training	56.0%	Negative publicity about the military	14.0%
Training conditions don't respect individuals	44.0%	Have to adapt to new places and experiences	14.0%
Threat to life	40.0%	Regimented military lifestyle	11.6%
Negative publicity about the military	32.0%	Threat to life	7.0%
Against my moral / religious beliefs	20.0%	Against my moral / religious beliefs	4.7%

*Combined responses for *Most Important* and *Important* points of scale.

4.4 Implications for developing Frameworks of Emirati youth goals

Tables 7-8 show that regardless of propensity, the dominant factors reflecting Emirati youth goals in 2019 were *Benefits*, *Family* and *Fidelity*. Positive propensity motivators are associated with the factors of *Benefits* and *Fidelity*. Negative propensity motivators are associated with *Benefits* and *Family*. A comparison of the Frameworks of both groups indicated differences in positive propensity factors. For Group 1, positive propensity motivators are associated with *Benefits* and *Challenge* (Table 7) whereas for Group 2, positive propensity motivators are associated with *Benefits* and *Dignity* (Table 8). The emergence of *Challenge* as an important goal for Group 1 suggests that physical/psychological demands and opportunities for personal growth from national service are major concerns to high school youths. Whereas, opportunities for self-actualization and personal accomplishment, and having work conditions that respect individuals (*Dignity*) are important issues to college youths. Hence, these findings suggest that instead of developing a generic Framework of Emirati Youth Goals, it would be more informative to develop Frameworks that reflect the separate needs of different youth groups. A finer understanding of whether propensity is driven by Occupational goals (salary, self-development, career, etc.) or Institutional/Social goals (duty, loyalty, risk, etc.) is important to the UAE military's effort to form a cohesive military force from draftees who are positively and negatively propensed, of different ages and levels of educational achievement.

Table 7. 2019 Framework of Emirati Youth Goals for high school participants (Group 1)

Occupational goals	Positive propensity motivators	Negative propensity motivators
<i>Benefits</i>	Want to develop new job skills	Want to continue studies Need to work after graduation for money Other career plans
<i>Challenge</i>	Want to develop discipline	-----
Social/Institutional goals	Positive propensity motivators	Negative propensity motivators
<i>Family</i>	-----	Family obligations
<i>Fidelity</i>	Duty to my country Support national defense	----- -----

Table 8: 2019 Framework of Emirati Youth Goals for college participants (G2)

Occupational goals	Positive propensity motivators	Negative propensity motivators
<i>Benefits</i>	Want to develop new job skills	Want to continue studies Need to work after graduation for money Other career plans
<i>Dignity</i>	Want to develop self-esteem	-----
Social/Institutional goals	Positive propensity motivators	Negative propensity motivators
<i>Family</i>	-----	Family obligations
<i>Fidelity</i>	Duty to my country Support national defense	----- -----

V. CONCLUSION

This study examined the national service enlistment propensities and motivations of Emirati male youths in order to develop Frameworks of Emirati Youth Goals that can shed light on their aims and expectations from the service. Results on propensity trends showed that college participants were more negatively propensed towards the service than high school participants which suggests that negative propensity rises with increasing educational attainment. For both participant groups, the common main motivators for positive propensity were: *Duty to my country; Support national defense; Want to develop new job skills* while the common main motivators for negative propensity were: *Want to continue studies; Need to work after graduation for money; Other career plans; Family obligations*. While the ranking of the top four most important negative propensity motivators was similar between participant groups, there were differences found in the importance of positive propensity motivators. For high school participants, positive propensity motivators are associated with the factors of *Benefits* and *Challenge* whereas for college participants, positive propensity motivators are associated with *Benefits* and *Dignity*.

Recruits enlisted in the UAE national service program comprise both positively and negatively propensed youths and understanding the relationship between enlistment propensity and motivations of these youths is vital to improving recruitment and retention strategies as well as maximizing the potential of these human resources. As the scope of this study is necessarily limited, the findings in this study suggest the need for future research in developing finer Frameworks that reflect the separate needs of different groups of recruits which could further our understanding of youth goals and support the sustainability of the UAE national service program. In order to do that, an annual survey could be developed for tracking changes in propensity and motivation trends among youths. Lastly, although national service is optional for female Emiratis, future research could sample both genders to differentiate their expectations of the service.

VI. Acknowledgements

This work was financially supported by the grant ADEK Award for Research Excellence (AARE) 2017 under Grant No. AARE17-186. The authors acknowledge the Arabic translation assistance provided by Dr. Elrashid Yousif Abbas, Khalifa University, College of Arts & Sciences, Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates.

REFERENCES

- [1] TDRA. (2021, 16 September). *Preserving the Emirati national identity*. Available: <https://u.ae/en/information-and-services/social-affairs/preserving-the-emirati-national-identity>
- [2] AsiaOne. (2019, 13 September). *National service forces: How does Singapore compare to South Korea and Taiwan?* Available: <https://www.asiaone.com/singapore/national-service-forces-how-does-singapore-compare-south-korea-and-taiwan>
- [3] A. Fulbright. (2020, 16 September). *IDF cuts mandatory military service for men to 2.5 years*. Available: <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-cuts-mandatory-military-service-for-men-to-2-5-years/>
- [4] The National. (2020, 14 September). *All male Emirati pupils due to graduate this year must enrol in National Service*. Available: <https://www.thenationalnews.com/uae/government/all-male-emirati-pupils-due-to-graduate-this-year-must-enrol-in-national-service-1.988292>
- [5] UK Parliament. (2021, 16 September). *National Service*. Available: <https://www.parliament.uk/about/living-heritage/transformingsociety/private-lives/yourcountry/overview/nationalservice/>
- [6] Selective Service System. (2021, 16 September). *History of the Selective Service System*. Available: <https://www.sss.gov/history-and-records/>
- [7] Bundeswehr Career. (2021, 16 September). *Voluntary Military Service: An opportunity, not an obligation*. Available: <https://www.bundeswehr.de/en/about-bundeswehr/ranks-and-careers/voluntary-military-service>
- [8] J. B. Alterman and M. Balboni, "Citizens in training: Conscription and nation-building in the United Arab Emirates," Center for Strategic and International Studies, Washington, DC, 2017.
- [9] S. B. Chaudhary. (2019, 16 September). *UAE: Nearly 70 per cent Emirati male adults under 30 'are obese'*. Available: <https://gulffnews.com/uae/health/uae-nearly-70-per-cent-emirati-male-adults-under-30-are-obese-1.65102616>
- [10] K. A. Sattar, M. E. Strackbein, J. A. Hoskins, B. J. George, A. R. Lancaster, and S. M. Marsh, "Youth Attitudes towards the Military Poll Two," Defense Manpower Data Center, Arlington, VA, April 2002.
- [11] M. J. Wilson, J. B. Greenlees, T. Hagerty, D. W. Hintze, and J. D. Lehnus, "Youth Attitude Tracking Study: 1999 Propensity and Advertising Report," Defense Manpower Data Center, Arlington, VA, 2000.
- [12] M. Kleykamp, "Unemployment, earnings and enrollment among post 9/11 veterans," *Social Science Research*, vol. 42, no. 3, pp. 836-851, 2013.
- [13] T. K. Bauer, S. Bender, A. R. Paloyo, and C. M. Schmidt, "Do Guns Displace Books? The Impact of Compulsory Military Service on Educational Attainment," *Economic Letters*, vol. 124, pp. 513-515, 2014.
- [14] Khaleej Times. (2016, 16 December). *National service must for Emiratis to get job*. Available: <https://www.khaleejtimes.com/national-service-must-for-emiratis-to-get-job>
- [15] R. M. Bailey, M. E. Strackbein, J. A. Hoskins, B. J. George, A. R. Lancaster, and S. M. Marsh, "Youth Attitudes towards the Military Poll One," Defense Manpower Data Center, Arlington, VA, April 2002.
- [16] J. Eighmey, "Why do youth enlist? Identification of underlying themes," *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 307-328, 2006.
- [17] C. C. Moskos Jr, "From institution to occupation: Trends in military organization," *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 41-50, 1977.
- [18] T. Woodruff, R. Kelty, and D. R. Segal, "Propensity to serve and motivation to enlist among American combat soldiers," *Armed Forces & Society*, vol. 32, no. 3, pp. 353-366, 2006.
- [19] H. L. Lim, "Perceptions of Emirati Youths on National Service at Initial Implementation Stage," *Sage Open*, vol. April-June, pp. 1-15, 8 May 2018.
- [20] H. L. Lim, A. Alzaabi, A. Almaeeni, and A. Almaeeni, "Enlistment Propensity and Motivations: Initial Views of Emirati Youths on National Service," in *5th Asia-Pacific Conference on Social Sciences & Management (APCSSM)*, Seoul, South Korea, 2019, pp. 90-101: Higher Education Forum.