

## ANTECEDENTS OF PREMATURE RETIREMENT OF JUNIOR COMMISSIONED OFFICERS/OTHER RANKS FROM ARMY IN INDIA

Sarabjit Singh Walia<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Rajesh Verma<sup>2</sup>

### Abstract

Every organization's greatest challenge is the ability to retain competent or skilled personnel. The Army has its own set of difficulties. The Indian Army invests a lot of time and money into converting a teenager from the rural background into a properly trained soldier. A soldier's true potential must be utilized before he or she retires. A huge increase in the number of JCOs / ORs leaving the Army has been attributed to changing lifestyles of those outside the Armed Forces, as well as additional professional choices. In the Indian Army, this results in a loss of experience and expertise, notably among JCOs and ORs. The study examines the primary reasons for JCOs/OR taking premature retirement by mixed method approach. The study highlights that the JCOs / OR are considering the option of Premature Release in view of a variety of reasons. Social commitments and looking after their land are one of the reasons for the Premature Release of the JCOs / OR.

**Keywords:** Premature Retirement, Resettlement, Veterans, Challenges, JCOs / OR

### Introduction

The Human Resource is an organization's most valuable asset. The fundamental aspect that determines an organization's production is trained or skilled workforce. The ability to retain qualified or skilled people / labour force is the greatest problem for every organisation. The Army has its own share of challenges. The Indian Army devotes a significant amount of time and resources to transforming a rural young man into a fully trained soldier. Before a soldier retires, his or her whole potential must be realized. The operational experience obtained by these soldiers is difficult to duplicate.

The Army has a retirement strategy that assures a younger age profile while supporting its high pyramidal structure. The current retirement policy is intended to guarantee that troops with the necessary experience remain in the Army. In the Armed Forces, there are a few critical jobs that can be held by experienced and professionally competent persons.

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<sup>1</sup>Phd Scholar, Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar, India

<sup>2</sup>Professor and Head., Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University, Jalandhar, India  
[sarabjitwalia@yahoo.com](mailto:sarabjitwalia@yahoo.com)<sup>1</sup>, [rajesh.verma@lpu.co.in](mailto:rajesh.verma@lpu.co.in)<sup>2</sup>

Many social changes have occurred in society, and the Army is not immune to them. The changing lifestyles of persons outside the Armed Forces, as well as more career options, has resulted in an increase in the number of JCOs / OR leaving the Indian Army. This results in a loss of experience and skill in the Indian Army, particularly among JCOs and ORs. It is concerning that the organisation loses a well-trained, experienced, and talented soldier, while ordinary or

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below average troops who cannot find acceptable jobs outside the Army remain in the forces.

In the past, significant attempts were made to enhance the hygiene and motivation of troops in the Indian Army. However, changes in the social features of life, such as enlistment in the military, family responsibilities, and likes, drive people to choose a Premature Release. The case of early discharge of JCOs / OR in the Indian Army has to be investigated.

### **Relevant Literature**

The research undertook a review of pertinent previous writings including print and electronic media over the Internet.

**Kumar (2018)**, broad area of study included the factors affecting a sailor's decision to re-engage after initial engagement, efforts by the navy to improve service conditions, the expectations of the sailors from the service, and the interplay between various factors in a sailor's decision-making process with respect to re-engagement beyond initial period. The study was successful in proving that there are factors over which the Service has limited modifiable effect (extrinsic factors) which influence a sailor's decision regarding continuation in service. The study could also prove that intrinsic factors which are modifiable by Service play a larger part than extrinsic factors in deciding re-engagement. Success was also obtained in categorizing sailors along branches, seniority, marital status, sea service etc. and understands their perceptions better.

**Lamba (2018)**, concluded that majority of the retired soldiers take with them vast reservoirs of experience and knowledge. On the individual or micro level, since the ex-servicemen are released in their late thirties or forties, they have major responsibilities towards their family. They have children to educate when they leave service. Release from Armed Forces means loss of income, loss of recognition, loss of identifications, loss of professional status, loss of spending time and energy, loss of associates/peers, and loss of autonomy or self-expression. The proposition of restarting a new career is quite problematic which involves adjustments, compromises, fresh strains and challenges.

**Singh (2017)**, also concluded that majority of the soldiers liked difficult and challenging tasks. Majority of them have a high sense of pride in the organisation and felt a sense of contentment in being a soldier. A large portion of the soldiers felt that they don't get respect they deserve. Majority of soldiers expect recognition of their efforts. Majority of soldiers have ranked timely leave, requirement of training and timely promotion as the most contributing factors towards workplace happiness.

**Pandey & Pandey, (2016)** highlighted that lesser number of promotion opportunities in the higher echelons of hierarchy often leads to discontentment which often paves way for premature retirement of the officer. Camaraderie starts missing among officers as well as Personnel Below Officers Bank (PBOR) Emotional intelligence of higher authorities with appropriate soft skills becomes pertinent at this crucial juncture as lack of it leads to negated energy. The research paper measures emotional intelligence in air force officers and focuses on its importance. The study concluded that Emotional Intelligence no longer remains a luxury. It has become a necessity to thrive in life especially in air force where at each level leadership is required, as they have to work

under different parameters which range from highly sensitive assignments to natural calamities. A well-groomed high Emotional Intelligence leader will cascade his positive effect down the chain which can lower the attrition of talented personnel in uniform

**Walia & Verma (2020)**, highlighted that the most common reason for serving individuals to quit the army and retire early is a lack of personal fulfilment. The study identified following main difficulties faced in resettling the JCOs and OR: -

- A. A higher age profile upon retiring in order to pursue a second job.
- B. For corporate employment, insufficient civil experience and awareness of rules.
- C. ESM's dissatisfaction with civil employment circumstances and apprehension about beginning their own business.
- D. Disparity between ESM's current skill sets and goals and the needs of civil industries and corporations.
- E. Tough competition for civil employment, with few openings.
- F. The majority of Army ESMs are unwilling to work away from home and prefer to seek job in their own area, where possibilities are few.

The review of literature brought out that there are a number of studies available on needs of the soldiers, motivation of the soldiers, retention issues faced by armed forces and post retirement employment of the soldiers. However, there has not been any attempt to study the likely causes or reasons of premature release of JCO /OR in the Army.

### **Need for Study**

With the changing lifestyles of persons outside the Armed Forces, as well as more career options, has resulted in an increase in the number of JCOs / OR leaving the Indian Army. The aim of the study is to examine the primary reasons for JCOs/OR taking premature retirement.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The objective of this study is to investigate reasons that lead to the JCOs / OR opting for a Premature Release.

### **Methodology**

Mixed research approach has been adopted to assess the reasons for opting for a Premature Release. To gauge PBOR reactions, both qualitative and quantitative approaches will be used. This includes a problem analysis, obtaining factual feedback from authorities, stakeholders, and persons about to retire through surveys, interaction, interviews, and data collection and analysis using management tools and methodologies.

### **Research Methodology**

The aim is to recommend measures to motivate PBORs and bring out reasons that are leading to drain in manpower due to large number of premature retirements. The method used includes a problem analysis, obtaining factual feedback from authorities, stakeholders, and persons about to

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retire via surveys, interactions, and interviews, as well as the collection and analysis of primary and secondary data using management tools and methodologies.

This investigation is further, centered on the serving soldiers in the class of JCOs and different Ranks (ORs). The data was collected in the form of researcher administered questionnaires, collected through responses from serving personnel as well as interview of 30 serving and retired personals that had opted for premature retirement.

### Sampling Design

- i. **Study Population.** The target population of the study included all the serving JCOs / OR of the Indian Army. As on 01 Jan 2020, the strength of JCOs / OR of the Indian Army was approximately **11,94,864** (The Statista Portal, 2020).
- ii. **Sampling Unit.** Individual.
- iii. **Sampling Frame.** Samples have been taken from JCOs / OR serving in peace and field in the Indian Army in different arms / services.
- iv. **Sampling Technique.** Simple Random Sampling method was adopted to reach out to serving JCOs / OR of the Indian Army and obtain their satisfaction levels.
- v. **Sample Size.** The final sample size of the study was 500.

### Observational Design

**Interviews:** Semi-structured interview of 15 serving participant who are about to retire and 15 veterans were conducted. All participants were a volunteer. All of the interview sessions were taped. Participants were prompted to provide further reasons for their responses, as well as to explain their responses to clear up any uncertainty. To avoid missing or escaping any vital information, all interviews were conducted in the native language. The interview was first transcribed and verbatim translated into English so that it could be analysed and processed using ALTAS ti ver 9. Based on the finding of the qualitative analysis and available literature questionnaire was designed to further collaborate the findings.

**Questionnaire :** Questions/ Statements were designed to investigate the reasons for JCOs / OR taking premature retirement. Statements 1 to 7 measured the research variables. One open ended question, soliciting their thoughts on the actions to be taken in the Indian Army to deter the JCOs / OR from opting for Premature Release.

1. Five Point Likert Scale (1–5) was used in the Questionnaire. The **questions scores ranged from 1 score for ‘Strongly Disagree and 5 for ‘Strongly Agree’.**

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. The Questionnaire was structured using Likert Scale to enable statistical analysis of the data obtained as follows: -
  - Response to questionnaire was undertaken only with the help of off-line mode. No online method was utilised considering the security aspects.
  - **Multi- Lingual Survey Questionnaire.** In order to reach out to a greater number of JCOs and other ranks, the questionnaire was also prepared in Roman Hindi.
3. **Data Collection Method.** The observations were collected through survey using attitudinal scale. 516 JCOs / OR responded to the final questionnaire.
4. **Data Analysis Methods.** The researcher undertook analysis of the qualitative data using ALTAS ti ver 9 and data collected through survey using IBM® SPSS® Statistics (Version 23) and other statistical tools.

### Results and Discussion

Reasons for opting for premature retirement from Armed forces vary and are based on number of variety of factors. Most of the personals retire after attaining colored service or attaining the age based on their rank, however some take voluntarily retirement due to their personal reasons. Table 1 indicates the common reasons for taking Premature retirement based on qualitative analysis.

**Table 1 Reason for Premature Retirement**

Category	Themes									
	Low Medical Category (Medical)	Lack of Promotion (Discretion)	Self-Employment	Look after farm land	Working Spouse	Family/Friend	Share more time with family	Taking Care of Parents/Family	Long working hours	
Participant	D12	D1, D5, D8, D10, D12, D15, D18	D1, D4, D7, D9, D14, D16, D20, D25, D26	D5, D7, D8, D12, D13, D14, D21, D22, D26, D30	D2, D7, D9, D15, D19, D21, D25	D1, D9, D16, D20, D26, D29	D1, D5, D9, D15, D18, D21, D22, D25, D26, D30	D7, D8, D10, D19, D20, D23, D25, D27, D28	D18, D29	
Frequency of Participant	01	07	09	10	07	06	10	09	02	

Final Survey questionnaire consisting of 7 statements were administered. The target population

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was serving JCOs / OR of Indian Army in peace & field. All responses were received online using google form. The 516 responses were compiled for analysis through SPSS.

**Analysis**

- i. **Kaiser-Mayer-Olkin (KMO) Measure of Adequacy.** The KMO test was carried out on the 7 Likert items (Q1 to Q7) used for the research to examine their factorability. The result of the KMO test was found to be 0.821 which is above the acceptable 0.6. Also, the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity was highly significant (Chi Square (253) = 4561.931,  $p < 0.05$ ). With these indicators, factor analysis was considered suitable for all 7 Likert items.

**Table 1.1: KMO and Bartlett's Test**

<i>KMO and Bartlett's Test</i>		
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.</b>		<b>.821</b>
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	<b>Approx. Chi- Square</b>	<b>4561.931</b>
	<b>Df</b>	<b>253</b>
	<b>Sig.</b>	<b>.000</b>

- ii. **Data Reliability.** Cronbach’s Alpha test was carried out to measure reliability of scale. The overall Cronbach Alpha score was 0.634 and therefore adequate in supporting reliability of scale.

**Table 1. 2: Cronbach’s Alpha Test Survey**

<b>Reliability Statistics</b>		
<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>.634</b>	<b>.642</b>	<b>7</b>

- iii. **Normality Test.** Normality test for the data was carried out to study if the responses from the primary population was normally distributed or not. Significance value of conformance to Normal distribution was found to be 0.000, which is less than the decided level of significance of 0.05, there is enough evidence that the data is normally distributed.

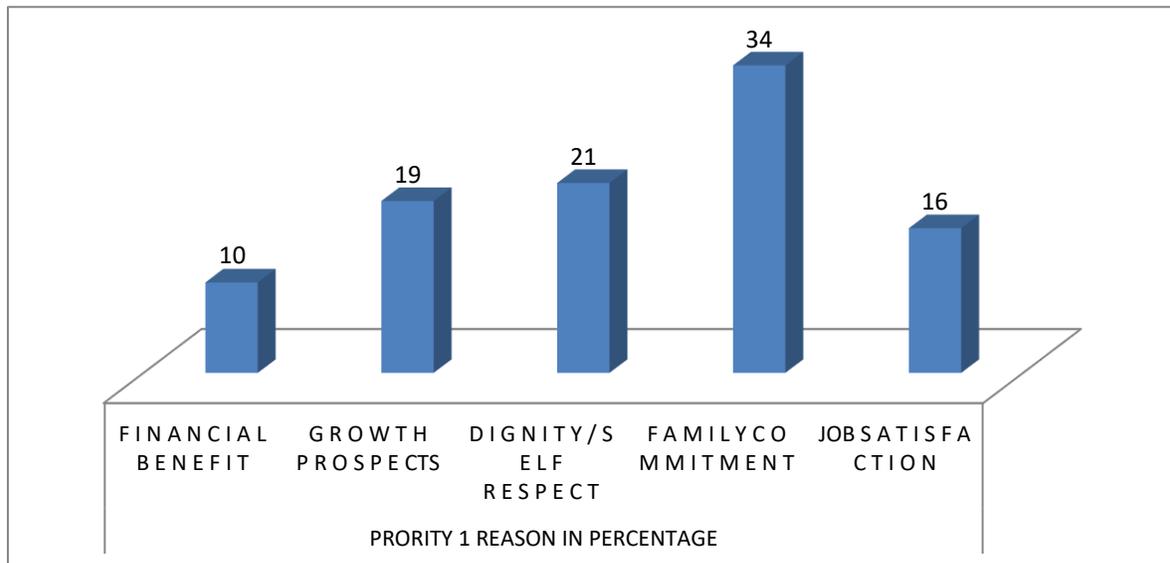
**Table 1.3: Test of Normality (Premature Release)**

<b>Tests of Normality</b>
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Kolmogorov-Smirnova			Shapiro-Wilk		
Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	df	Sig.
.089	516	.000	.921	516	.000
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction					

**Analysis of Question 8: To assess the prioritisation / importance of reasons for opting for Premature Release.**

- i. The Question was posed to the respondents as to ‘If I opt for Premature Release, the most important reason for opting is\_. Options to be Ranked 1 to 5, assigning most important reason a rank of 1 and the least important reason a rank of 5. The question was aimed to identify as to what the users consider as sensitive personal data which can increase their vulnerability if shared online. Histogram of responses is placed as Figure given below.



**Figure 1. 1 : Bar Graph representing Responses**

- ii. Family Commitment is considered as the most important reason for Premature Release by 34 % respondents. Similarly, Dignity / Self Respect by 21 %, Growth Prospect by 19 %, Job Satisfaction by 16 % and Financial Benefits by 10 %. It is evident that the family commitments are considered to be the most influencing factor to make a soldier opt for Premature Release.

**Findings & Recommendations**

From the qualitative study, for participants, who had taken Premature retirement, following are the major reasons for Premature retirement that have emerged: -

- i. Look after farm land.
- ii. Taking Care of Parents/Family.
- iii. Share more time with family.

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### iv. Lack of Promotion (Progression).

As can be seen that besides the reason of taking care of farm, the other reason for Premature Retirement is due to poor HR Management and incase the skilled manpower is required to be retained then promotion and posting profile needs to be suitably adjusted to meet the social aspirations of soldiers.

Based on the quantitative analysis, following are the major findings which are in line with the qualitative research: -

- i. **Jobs outside Indian Army.** 59% of respondents feel that civil job will give them better opportunity to look after their family.
- ii. **Children Education after Leaving Indian Army.** 68% of respondents feel that they will not be able to look after their children education when they leave Army.
- iii. **Stability of Postings in Jobs Outside Army.** 62% of respondents feel that job outside Army will give them better stability of posting.
- iv. **Opportunity to Do Ones Best.** 58% of respondents think that jobs outside Army will give them adequate opportunity to do their best.
- v. **Premature Retirement Vs Promotion.** 54% of respondents will opt for premature retirement even if they are given a promotion.

Besides the above, 51% of respondents feel that all their needs are not met adequately in the Indian Army and 65 % of the respondents feel that if they have to opt for Premature Release, the most important reason for the same is their family commitment.

The study highlights that the JCOs / OR are considering the option of Premature Release in view of a variety of reasons. Social commitments and looking after their land are one of the reasons for the Premature Release of the JCOs / OR. There has been an increase in the rate of JCOs / OR opting for Premature Release. Retention of skilled and trained manpower is a concern for the Indian Army. Necessary actions are required to be taken at Organisational level to meet their family and social commitment of the JCOs/ OR and ensure that the organizational efficiency and effectiveness is maintained.

### Recommendations

**Enhance Quality of Life.** The Army has launched a number of measures to enhance the working and living standards of its JCOs / OR, with the goal of increasing overall satisfaction. Better effectiveness and efficiency will result from increased satisfaction, making the Army more efficient and productive.

**Looking after Home Issues.** A centralised policy binding on states to be promulgated as regard legal trouble soldiers face at their villages of their land grab and harassment to their families while they are away on duty. A special leave akin to Child Care leave be devised so that soldiers can be at

their home during important events like harvesting, construction of home or taking care of ailing parents and children examinations.

**Working Hours.** Troops must have time for themselves and for their families. Whether on the lines or in the married quarters, the troops must find time to do their own thing. Efforts must be taken at the unit level to guarantee that all troops, excluding those on vital assignments, have Sundays and holidays.

**Leave to attend to Social Commitments.** Soldiers must be allowed leave to attend social obligations such as weddings, funerals, and births of relatives and friends in their towns / villages. This will bring the soldier closer to his family and kin.

**Field Postings.** Issues of separation from family due to field postings in case of soldiers with higher seniority and age be addressed. It is observed that the soldiers of lower service seniority and age are not very disturbed by the repeated field postings. However, the repeated field postings affect only some of the soldiers. The cases of these soldiers may be considered at Unit / formation level and it should be ensured that motivated volunteers are sent to field on postings.

**More Stability and Increased duration of Postings.** Reduced frequency of transfers or more stability in a station will facilitate better education of the children of the soldier which has been observed to be a major concern among the soldiers who are opting for Premature Release.

**Motivation Programmes.** Motivational programmes might be developed and used to keep 13-15-year-old troops engaged in the military. It may be possible to make targeted effort to understand their social and personal needs. This will assist us in determining solutions to specific difficulties, allowing us to retain soldiers based on the suggestions of senior commanders or commanding officers.

### Conclusion

As evidenced by the reactions of JCOs / OR, the Army will face serious high rates of Premature Release of JCOs / OR in the near future. The shortage of trained people in the Indian Army will only worsen as the demand for trained people grows to address the challenges of future technologies. In order to improve retention, we must aim our efforts in the proper direction and at the appropriate type of soldier. The purpose of this study was to identify and quantify the many elements that influence a soldier's decision-making process. Certain proposals have been made for improving retention through selective targeting of improvement initiatives. This study is believed to be the first attempt to quantify the impact of factors that contribute on a soldier's choice to choose Premature Release in the Army, and it may be used for independent verification.

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