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THE FATE OF DISENROLLEES FROM TECHNICAL TRAINING IN THE U.S. NA--ETC(U)
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TRAINING IN THE U.S. NAVY

R. F. BOOTH

M. S. MC NALLY

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**The Fate of Disenrollees from Technical Training
in the U.S. Navy***

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**The Fate of Disenrollees from Technical Training
in the U.S. Navy**

Abstract

Aptitude, background, personality, and vocational interest information was related to the post-training performance effectiveness and occupational advancement of 1,527 enlistees who were disenrolled from Navy health care training. Effectiveness was defined as completion of an obligated term of service with a recommendation for reenlistment, and occupational advancement was defined as moving from a general duty assignment into an alternative Navy occupation. The rate of effectiveness among disenrollees was 40% as compared with 81% among graduates of the training program; when reason for disenrollment was considered, the effectiveness rate of enlistees who were dropped for disciplinary reasons was found to be only 19%. Age, aptitude, education, and Social Conformity and Activity scores on the Comrey Personality Scales were found to discriminate significantly between effective and ineffective disenrollees, and age, aptitude, education, and Navy Vocational Interest Inventory scores were found to discriminate significantly between disenrollees who had moved into different occupational specialty areas, e.g., seamanship, supply, and administration or clerical. Implications of these findings for Navy vocational guidance and placement programs are discussed.

**The Fate of Disenrollees from Technical Training
in the U.S. Navy**

Vocational counseling and placement services have become widely accepted as a practical means for reducing dependence on trial-and-error in making occupational assignments. Despite growing sophistication in the use of vocational guidance procedures, however, job placement errors are not uncommon.

Job placement services in the U.S. Navy are provided by recruiters and classifiers. These guidance specialists have been trained to relate assessments of an individual's abilities and interests to the work activities and job requirements specified for a wide range of naval occupations; the placement recommendations made by recruiters and classifiers play a significant role in determining the initial occupational assignment received by an enlistee. Although these procedures produce satisfactory job placements for most individuals who enlist in the Navy, occupational assignments for many enlistees are later found to have been inappropriate.

Very little is known about the fate of enlistees who fail to make a satisfactory work adjustment in the occupation to which they were initially assigned. The usual procedure in the Navy is to reassign these individuals to general duty positions, where opportunities to receive on-the-job training in other occupational specialties are usually available. The extent to which reassigned enlistees perform effectively in these general duty positions and

then move into other occupational groups is largely unknown. By determining the characteristics and performance effectiveness of reassigned enlistees, it may be possible to refine placement procedures and to better assess the costs of placement errors.

This study was conducted to investigate the characteristics and performance effectiveness of enlistees who were disenrolled from Hospital Corpsman (HM) and Dental Technician (DT) training. Many enlistees who are assigned to work in the health care specialties do not complete the course of instruction which is required for designation as either an HM or DT; reasons for not completing the course include academic failure, disenrollment at the student's own request (lack of motivation), disciplinary problems, and medical difficulties. The purpose of this study was (a) to relate health care training outcomes to the background characteristics and post-training performance effectiveness of enlistees and (b) to relate background characteristics to the post-training performance effectiveness and occupational advancement of enlistees who were disenrolled during health care training.

Method

Sample

The participants in this study included 7,188 enlistees who entered Hospital Corps or Dental Technician Class "A" School during 1973. Students who reported to training from an on-the-job apprenticeship program ("strikers") were excluded from the sample.

Measures

The questionnaires that were used in this study included a background

information (BI) form, the Comrey Personality Scales (CPS; Comrey, 1970), and the Navy Vocational Interest Inventory (NVII; Clark, 1961). The BI contained 14 items which pertained to age at the time of service entry, years of schooling completed, number of suspensions or expulsions from school, number of arrests for offenses other than traffic violations, and motivation for becoming a Hospital Corpsman or Dental Technician (Booth, Webster, & McNally, 1976). The CPS contains 180 items which provide self-evaluations on eight personality dimensions. The NVII contains 180 activity triads which were scored to provide an index of an individual's interest in health care work (Clark, 1961); scores were also computed on NVII scales which assessed an individual's interests in outdoor, mechanical, electronic, and clerical work activities. All three questionnaires were administered to students during the first week of training. In addition, General Classification Test (GCT) and Arithmetic Reasoning (ARI) aptitude scores were extracted from the service records of each student.

Criteria

Criteria for the study were training outcome, post-training performance effectiveness, and occupational advancement. Five training outcome categories were derived from school records; these included graduation, academic failure, voluntary withdrawal, disciplinary drop, and disenrollment for medical or other reasons. Performance effectiveness was defined as completion of an obligated term of active duty service with a recommendation for reenlistment. Occupational advancement was defined as moving out of a general duty job into an alternative Navy occupation. Information on performance effectiveness and

occupational advancement was obtained from computerized service history files compiled from Naval Military Personnel Command (formerly the Bureau of Naval Personnel) records.

Analysis

Means and standard deviations were computed on the aptitude, background, personality, interest, and performance effectiveness variables for enlistees in each of the five training outcome categories; the significance of differences among means was determined by performing analyses of variance and t-tests. Means, standard deviations, and t-tests for significance of differences between effective and ineffective disenrollees were then computed. Finally, frequency distributions of jobs held by the effective and ineffective disenrollees was constructed, and the significance of job category differences in aptitude, background, personality, and interest scores was evaluated by using analysis of variance procedures.

Results

Training Outcomes

The first step in this study was to determine how enlistees who were disenrolled during HM or DT training differed from enlistees who completed the training. Means and standard deviations for the aptitude, background, personality, and interest measures are presented in Table 1 for each of the five training outcome categories. Substantial differences were revealed between the disenrollees and graduates and, to a lesser extent, among enlistee groups disenrolled for different reasons.

It was found that the disenrollees had lower aptitude test scores, fewer years of schooling, and more disciplinary problems with school and civil authorities than the graduates. On the personality inventory, it was found that the disenrollees were less likely than the graduates to have described themselves as liking hard work, as striving to excel, as having confidence in themselves, and as being calm and happy. On the motivation and interest measures, the disenrollees reported less often than the graduates that they had wanted to become an HM or DT or that they were interested in health care work.

When reason for disenrollment was related to enlistee characteristics, it was found that the aptitude test scores of students who had failed academically were significantly lower, on the average, than the aptitude test scores of students who were disenrolled for other reasons. Similarly, the motivation and interest scores of students who were disenrolled at their own request were significantly lower than the motivation and interest scores of other disenrollees. Finally, the students who were disenrolled for disciplinary reasons reported experiencing more frequent difficulties with civil authorities and expressed a greater tendency to challenge the laws and institutions of society, to resist controls on their behavior, and to be nonconforming than students who were disenrolled for other reasons.

Performance Effectiveness

The next step in this study was to determine how training outcomes and disenrollee characteristics were related to post-training performance effectiveness. The effectiveness rates of enlistees in each of the five training

outcome categories are presented in Table 1. It can be seen that training outcomes were highly related to performance effectiveness. The rate of effectiveness among disenrollees (40%) was substantially lower than the rate of effectiveness among graduates (81%). In addition, the rate of effectiveness among enlistees who were disenrolled for disciplinary reasons (19%) was found to be much lower than the rate of effectiveness among enlistees who were disenrolled for motivational or academic reasons (43%).

Insert Table 1 about here.

Significant differences were also found when the characteristics of effective and ineffective disenrollees were compared. Means and standard deviations for the aptitude, background, and personality measures are presented in Table 2 for both the effective and the ineffective disenrollees. Effective disenrollees were older at the time of service entry, had completed more years of schooling, and had experienced fewer disciplinary problems with school authorities than had the ineffective disenrollees. On the personality inventory, the effective disenrollees described themselves more frequently than the ineffective disenrollees as conforming to the standards of society and as being energetic and liking hard work.

Insert Table 2 about here.

Occupational Advancement

The final step in this study was to investigate the relationship between enlistee characteristics and the types of jobs performed by enlistees following disenrollment from HM or DT training. Frequency distributions of the jobs held by the effective and the ineffective disenrollees are presented in Table 3. These figures indicate that approximately 66% of the effective disenrollees, had moved out of general duty positions into alternative Navy occupations. The alternative occupations chosen most frequently by these individuals were in the fields of seamanship (e.g., Boatswain's Mate or Signalman), supply (e.g., Mess Management Specialist or Storekeeper), and administration or clerical (e.g., Personnelman or Postal Clerk). Although a majority of the disenrollees who had achieved an alternative rating in the Navy were located in these three occupational specialty areas, ratings achieved by the remaining disenrollees were distributed across the spectrum of Navy occupations.

Insert Table 3 about here.

Means and standard deviations for the aptitude, background, personality, and interest measures are presented in Table 4 for the effective disenrollees who had remained in general duty jobs and the effective disenrollees who had moved into seamanship, supply, administration, and other (primarily technical) specialty jobs in the Navy. These figures reveal significant between-group differences on 11 of the 19 variables considered in this comparison. Furthermore, significant differences were found in each of the four variable domains.

On the aptitude measures, for example, it was found that those disenrollees who had moved into technical (i.e., "other specialties") and administration jobs and those who had remained in general duty positions had higher verbal test scores than disenrollees who had moved into seamanship and supply positions. The disenrollees in supply positions were also found to have lower scores on the arithmetic reasoning test than the disenrollees working in other Navy jobs. Disenrollees who had moved into seamanship positions were found to have entered the Navy at a younger age than the disenrollees who were working in other areas, and, in addition, disenrollees who had moved into seamanship, supply, and technical positions had described themselves on the personality and interest measures as having a greater preference for pursuing stereotypically masculine activities and interests than had the disenrollees who were working in administration jobs or who had remained in a general duty position. Finally, those disenrollees who had moved into administration jobs had reported experiencing fewer disciplinary problems with civil authorities, had described themselves as being more outgoing and extroverted, and, together with the disenrollees in supply jobs, had described themselves as having a greater interest in clerical work activities than had the disenrollees who were working in other Navy jobs.

Insert Table 4 about here.

Discussion

The results from this study have indicated that students who fail to make an adequate adjustment to working in an HM or DT training environment are unlikely to perform effectively in other Navy work environments. Although the incidence of disenrollment could probably be reduced by adopting more rigorous standards in evaluating the aptitudes, prior school experiences, and vocational interests of candidates for assignment to HM or DT training (Booth, Webster, and McNally, 1976; Booth, McNally, and Berry, 1978), this approach to reducing attrition in technical training is not always feasible. Since some attrition is inevitable, and even desirable, a more practical approach to resolving the disenrollment question might be to make available for reassignment only those disenrollees who are identified through "secondary" selection procedures as being the most likely to provide effective service in another Navy work role. In addition, greater use might be made of career counseling and remedial training options (Navy Times, 1979) for those disenrollees who have the will to succeed, but who lack the proper direction and fundamental preparation for coping with the demands of military life.

The problems experienced by many disenrollees appeared to have been a continuation of difficulties which began prior to service entry. Results from the comparison of schooling and disciplinary records have indicated that the disenrollees were much more likely than the graduates to have entered the Navy with a history of nonconformity with societal and organizational standards. This was particularly true for the disciplinary drops, who were also found to

have an extremely low post-training performance effectiveness rate. In general, the variables which were found to be related to the performance effectiveness of disenrollees indicated that those individuals who failed to make a satisfactory adjustment may have been lacking in the maturity, tenacity, and self-discipline that is needed to satisfy military requirements (Plag and Goffman, 1966; Guinn, Johnson, and Kantor, Note 1). For some of these individuals, the chances of making a successful adjustment might have been improved if their initial work assignment had been to a less demanding general duty job rather than to training for a technical job. Furthermore, it seems plausible that the disenrollment experience itself would often have a negative impact on an enlistee's attitude toward subsequent work assignments.

Individual differences in aptitude, background, personality, and interests were clearly related to the occupational choices made by effective disenrollees. Moving from a general duty position into an alternative occupation depends to a considerable extent upon an enlistee's own initiative. The job seeking actions that were taken by these individuals, as inferred from work assignment outcomes, were found to be generally consistent with predictions of vocational choice theory (Holland, 1973) and provide further evidence for the validity of noncognitive measures in the job counseling and placement process. The alternative occupations which were chosen most frequently, however, tended to have relatively modest entry and training requirements. This finding may indicate that the opportunities provided for the occupational advancement of disenrollees may be somewhat limited.

Disenrollees

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Overall, the results of this study have suggested that the prospects for disenrollees from Navy technical training programs are not particularly good. Fewer than half of the enlistees who were disenrolled from Hospital Corps and Dental Technician Class "A" School training managed to perform effectively in other Navy work roles. Nevertheless, the success of those disenrollees who did perform effectively has provided evidence that even in a highly structured work environment such as the military there is sufficient flexibility available to accommodate the movement of individuals into alternative occupations which may be better suited to their particular combination of abilities and interests.

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Table 1

Training Outcomes Related to Enlistee Characteristics and Post-Training Performance Effectiveness

Variable	Training Outcomes					F-Ratio
	Graduation	Academic Failure	Voluntary Withdrawal	Disciplinary Drop	Medical & Other Drop	
<u>Aptitude:</u>						
GCT	57.29 (7.33) ^a	48.17 (6.92)	52.29 (6.79)	53.92 (7.28)	54.34 (6.52)	261.81*
ARI	52.36 (7.11)	45.12 (5.76)	48.77 (5.84)	50.22 (6.96)	49.68 (6.58)	178.28*
<u>Background:</u>						
Age at service entry	18.96 (1.79)	18.55 (1.78)	18.49 (1.67)	18.25 (1.56)	18.80 (1.93)	19.99*
Years of schooling	12.24 (1.10)	11.45 (1.27)	11.50 (1.11)	11.30 (1.00)	11.86 (1.26)	139.48*
Suspensions/expulsions	0.35 (0.88)	0.83 (1.34)	0.78 (1.29)	0.98 (1.46)	0.75 (1.38)	66.63*
Arrests	0.14 (0.46)	0.23 (0.58)	0.26 (0.75)	0.47 (0.96)	0.35 (0.83)	25.63*
<u>Personality:</u>						
Trust	83.58 (11.80)	79.71 (11.08)	81.75 (11.33)	82.32 (13.43)	80.14 (12.83)	17.44*
Order	94.93 (13.84)	93.31 (13.43)	91.26 (14.68)	89.02 (13.88)	91.18 (13.97)	17.58*

^aMean (standard deviation)

*p < .05

Variable	Training Outcomes					F-Ratio
	Graduation	Academic Failure	Voluntary Withdrawal	Disciplinary Drop	Medical & Other Drop	
<u>Personality (continued)</u>						
Social Conformity	90.36 (14.29)	88.14 (13.01)	89.29 (14.13)	83.83 (16.98)	85.32 (16.48)	11.96*
Activity	98.34 (13.32)	92.82 (14.11)	93.71 (14.54)	91.78 (16.45)	91.58 (14.31)	44.14*
Emotional Stability	99.72 (14.62)	94.04 (15.65)	93.09 (15.19)	93.31 (16.61)	91.71 (17.02)	55.04*
Extraversion	89.91 (19.29)	88.13 (18.68)	88.46 (19.12)	89.50 (20.43)	87.36 (20.16)	2.98
Masculinity/femininity	85.86 (14.12)	83.70 (13.78)	85.40 (14.15)	86.50 (12.37)	86.19 (13.65)	3.02
Empathy	102.53 (14.03)	99.92 (14.46)	99.98 (15.11)	99.73 (17.37)	98.41 (16.92)	10.74*
<u>Occupational Orientation:</u>						
Motivation (BI)	7.80 (1.55)	6.84 (1.75)	6.43 (1.88)	6.84 (1.75)	7.22 (1.81)	161.12*
Interest (NVII)	29.75 (10.71)	24.74 (12.59)	21.39 (13.58)	26.50 (11.76)	26.11 (12.50)	98.90*
<u>Performance Effectiveness</u>	0.81 ^b (0.39)	0.45 (0.50)	0.42 (0.49)	0.19 (0.39)	0.30 (0.46)	308.63*
N	5,661	550	691	119	167	

^bpercent effective.

Table 2
Disenrollee Characteristics Related to
Post-Training Performance Effectiveness

Variable	Effective		Ineffective		<u>t</u>
	<u>Disenrollees^a</u>		<u>Disenrollees^b</u>		
	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>S.D.</u>	
<u>Aptitude:</u>					
GCT	51.17	7.26	51.12	7.22	0.25
ARI	47.51	6.49	47.75	6.18	-0.76
<u>Background:</u>					
Age at service entry	18.91	1.93	18.28	1.56	6.97*
Years of schooling	11.81	1.10	11.30	1.18	8.49*
Suspensions/expulsions	0.56	1.14	0.97	1.42	-5.87*
Arrests	0.19	0.59	0.33	0.80	-3.74*
<u>Personality:</u>					
Trust	81.82	10.86	80.18	12.15	2.57*
Order	93.40	13.58	90.65	14.44	3.54*
Social Conformity	91.04	13.29	85.90	14.70	6.60*
Activity	95.09	13.74	91.57	14.88	4.42*
Emotional Stability	94.56	14.87	92.44	16.12	2.47*
Extraversion	86.66	18.55	89.39	19.60	-2.59*
Masculinity/femininity	83.91	14.44	85.71	13.39	-2.35
Empathy	101.45	14.96	98.53	15.36	3.49*

^aN = 611

^bN = 916

*p < .05

Table 3
Occupational Distribution of Effective and
Ineffective Disenrollees

Occupational Specialty Area	Effective <u>Disenrollees</u>		Ineffective <u>Disenrollees</u>	
	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Frequency</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Seamanship	103	16.9	22	2.4
Marine engineering and maintenance	21	3.4	4	0.4
Weapons	17	2.8	6	0.7
Communications	20	3.3	4	0.4
Supply	86	14.1	19	2.1
Administration	101	16.5	5	0.5
Health care	26	4.3	0	0.0
Aviation support	20	3.3	2	0.2
Miscellaneous ratings	9	1.5	4	0.4
General duties	208	34.0	850	92.8

Table 4

Enlistee Characteristics Related to the Occupational Distribution of Effective Disenrollees

<u>Variables</u>	<u>General Duties</u>	<u>Seamanship</u>	<u>Occupational Distribution</u>			<u>Other Ratings</u>	<u>F-Ratio</u>
			<u>Supply</u>	<u>Administration</u>			
<u>Aptitude:</u>							
GCT	51.93 (7.03) ^a	49.28 (6.35)	48.58 (7.69)	52.32 (6.75)	52.41 (7.80)	6.53*	
ARI	47.45 (6.42)	47.05 (6.25)	45.30 (5.89)	47.86 (6.69)	49.28 (6.61)	4.90*	
<u>Background:</u>							
Age at service entry	19.08 (2.10)	18.13 (1.17)	19.10 (1.93)	19.43 (2.27)	18.71 (1.60)	7.16*	
Years of schooling	11.79 (1.10)	11.68 (1.38)	11.86 (0.91)	12.04 (0.82)	11.75 (1.14)	1.58	
Suspensions/expulsions	0.57 (1.10)	0.86 (1.44)	0.39 (0.96)	0.32 (0.80)	0.60 (1.20)	3.46*	
Arrests	0.30 (0.80)	0.13 (0.36)	0.21 (0.66)	0.05 (0.22)	0.15 (0.40)	3.84*	
<u>Personality:</u>							
Trust	80.98 (11.28)	80.58 (10.71)	82.61 (9.57)	83.24 (11.38)	82.45 (10.69)	1.15	
Order	92.29 (13.36)	93.07 (14.56)	94.93 (12.44)	96.20 (14.46)	92.08 (12.97)	1.82	

^aMean (standard deviation)

*p < .05

Occupational Distribution

<u>Variables</u>	<u>General Duties</u>	<u>Seamanship</u>	<u>Supply</u>	<u>Administration</u>	<u>Other Ratings</u>	<u>F-Ratio</u>
Social Conformity	89.72 (13.33)	91.43 (13.42)	93.52 (12.88)	93.11 (14.13)	89.38 (12.42)	2.19
Activity	93.34 (13.85)	95.19 (15.06)	95.79 (13.43)	96.75 (13.64)	95.99 (12.69)	1.25
Emotional Stability	93.59 (15.42)	91.75 (15.56)	94.46 (13.12)	97.34 (15.38)	96.20 (13.83)	2.14
Extraversion	85.10 (17.83)	84.48 (19.77)	85.40 (16.46)	92.27 (21.29)	85.10 (17.05)	2.88*
Masculinity/femininity	81.38 (15.13)	86.64 (12.54)	85.11 (12.91)	79.85 (15.62)	88.29 (13.26)	6.98*
Empathy	101.63 (15.95)	100.10 (14.46)	99.91 (13.74)	105.43 (15.44)	100.14 (13.74)	2.44
<u>Interests:</u>						
Outdoor	5.65 (2.51)	6.95 (2.26)	6.44 (2.25)	5.20 (2.39)	6.51 (2.94)	7.29*
Mechanical	4.50 (4.09)	6.79 (4.38)	5.10 (3.51)	3.60 (3.56)	6.63 (5.05)	10.16*
Electronic	3.92 (7.12)	2.70 (7.67)	4.38 (7.37)	5.23 (6.03)	6.32 (7.03)	3.52*
Clerical	4.62 (3.35)	4.60 (3.37)	5.33 (4.08)	6.23 (4.09)	3.85 (3.33)	5.72*
Health Care	25.35 (11.77)	20.90 (12.87)	25.85 (12.44)	25.43 (12.19)	23.74 (13.91)	2.25
N	208	103	86	101	113	

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rate among graduates of the training program; when reason for disenrollment was considered, the effectiveness rate of enlistees who were dropped for disciplinary reasons was found to be only 19%. Age, aptitude, education, and Social Conformity and Activity scores on the Comrey Personality Scales were found to discriminate significantly between effective and ineffective disenrollees, and age, aptitude, education, and Navy Vocational Interest Inventory scores were found to discriminate significantly between disenrollees who had moved into different occupational specialty areas, e.g., seamanship, supply, and administration or clerical. Implications of these findings for Navy vocational guidance and placement programs are discussed.

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