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The 2018 Colombian Military Academy dataset: a sociological study of population

Section: TECHNOSCIENCE

Scientific and technological research article

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Base de datos de la Escuela Militar de Cadetes colombiana
2018: un estudio sociológico de su población

Base de dados da Escola Militar de Cadetes colombiana
2018: um estudo sociológico de sua população

Base de données de l'École militaire des cadets colombienne
2018: une étude sociologique de sa population

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Abstract. This article presents a data set of the population of military students, resulting from a sociological study completed at the Colombian Military Academy (Escuela Militar de Cadetes General José María Córdova - ESMIC). By analyzing perceptions and attitudes of ESMIC's students in six areas, namely, socio-demographic characteristics; professional behavior; social patterns; military values; civil-military relations; and integration of women in the military, this data set aims to provide scientific information to assist in the design, implementation, and effectiveness of the National Army of Colombia's policies.

Keywords: Dataset; comparative studies; Colombian Military Academy; military sociology, National Army of Colombia

Resumen. Este artículo presenta una base de datos de la población de estudiantes militares, resultado de un estudio sociológico realizado en la Escuela Militar de Cadetes General José María Córdova (ESMIC). Al analizar las percepciones y las actitudes de los estudiantes de la ESMIC en seis áreas, a saber, las características sociodemográficas, comportamiento profesional, patrones sociales, valores militares, relaciones civiles-militares, y la integración de las mujeres en el Ejército, esta base de datos tiene como objetivo proporcionar información científica para ayudar en el diseño, implementación y efectividad de las políticas del Ejército Nacional de Colombia.

Palabras clave: Base de datos; Ejército Nacional de Colombia; Escuela Militar de Cadetes General José María Córdova; estudios comparativos; sociología militar

Resumo. Este artigo apresenta um banco de dados da população de estudantes militares, resultado de um estudo sociológico realizado na Escola Militar de Cadetes (Escuela Militar de Cadetes General José María Córdova - ESMIC). Ao analisar as percepções e atitudes dos alunos da ESMIC em seis áreas, a saber, características sociodemográficas, comportamento profissional, padrões sociais, valores militares, relações civis-militares e a integração das mulheres nas forças armadas, esta base de dados tem como objetivo fornecer informações científicas para auxiliar na elaboração, implementação e efetividade das políticas do Exército Nacional da Colômbia.

Palavras-chave: Academia Militar Colombiana; Banco de dados; estudos comparativos; Exército Nacional da Colômbia; sociologia militar.

Résumé. Cet article présente une base de données sur la population des étudiants militaires, résultat d'une étude sociologique menée à l'École militaire des cadets (Escuela Militar de Cadetes General José María Córdova - ESMIC). En analysant les perceptions et les attitudes des étudiants de ESMIC dans six domaines, à savoir, les caractéristiques sociodémographiques, le comportement professionnel, les modèles sociaux, les valeurs militaires, les relations civiles-militaires, et l'intégration des femmes dans l'armée, cette base de données a l'objectif de fournir des informations scientifiques pour aider à la conception, la mise en œuvre et l'efficacité des politiques de l'Armée nationale colombienne.

Mots-clés: Académie militaire colombienne ; Armée nationale colombienne ; Base de données ; études comparatives ; sociologie militaire.

Introduction

In recent years, there has been an increased interest in sociological studies in western countries, especially within the military. The reason for this is not only the value of the gathered social data for decision-making but also, the significance of individual perceptions in determining mutual interaction characteristics, cultural prejudices, and professional acceptance patterns. In particular, the works of Young & Nauta (2013); Soeters, Shields, & Rietjen (2014); Cancian & Klein (2015); Duncanson & Woodward (2015); Kentor & Jorgenson (2017); Swarts (2017); Dandeker (2017); Caforio & Nuciari (2018); De Pedro, Astor, Gilreath, Benbenishty, & Berkowitz (2018); Harris, McDonald, & Sparks (2018); and Soeters (2018) have provided the military community with valuable material for sociological studies to delve into more in-depth research to analyze central issues, such as lack of equity, sexual harassment, and gender-biased policies.

In Latin America, however, military sociological research projects have been scarce and usually limited to the study of the effects of the armed conflict on individuals or social groups (Santamaria, Steiner, Botero, Martinez, & Millan, 2010; Tokatlian, 2010; Suarez Salgado, 2011; Morgan, 2014; Rozo, 2017). Furthermore, the protection of crucial confidential information from alleged adversaries, enmity between the organizations—civil or military—responsible for social studies, and the particularities of civil-military relations have traditionally derived limited goals and low-impact results (Pion-Berlin, Ugues, & Esparza, 2011; Diamond, 2015; Stepan, 2015; Bitar & Gardner, 2016; Mares, 2018). Nevertheless, regional circumstances are changing, and the military is increasingly aware of the need for interdisciplinary area studies that support transformation policies and effectiveness; this is the case of the National Army of Colombia.

The objective of this article is to introduce a military population dataset derived from a sociological study performed at the Officers' Military Academy of the National Army of Colombia (Escuela Militar de Cadetes General Jose Maria Cordova, hereafter ESMIC¹). Our intention is three-fold: 1) to elaborate on previous exploratory population studies at the ESMIC (2014, 2015); 2) to provide decision-makers and researchers with practical information for future determinations; and 3) to offer a model for further military sociological studies in the region to help solve recurring inquiries about the uniformed personnel and their families.

Overview and methodology

This new dataset originated from a research project that sought to meet the needs of ESMIC's directives and scholars for updated scientific data to assess and enhance the scope and effectiveness of the existing and future policies. The study conducted at the ESMIC

1 The ESMIC is located in Bogotá D.C., the capital of Colombia. It schools male and female students from all the country during a four year period (eight academic levels) to become Army officers

is, thus, comprehensive and highly significant in several ways 1) As the sole institution to educate future Army Officers in Colombia, the ESMIC integrates a multicultural and multiethnic group of people who aspire to serve in the Army. Consequently, uncovering cultural characteristics particular to the Colombian context can help to analyze behavior and thought patterns in the [Colombian] military population. 2) The ESMIC is the principal stage for proposing and implementing transformation plans on military education for the National Army of Colombia; therefore, improving the effectiveness of policies in the ESMIC would positively impact the Army's training strategies. Of particular interest here is the recently implemented gender equality policy, Athena (ESMIC, 2018).

The data was gathered via an anonymous pen-and-paper survey of 150 multiple-choice questions in Spanish, designed by the authors of this article with the support of an interdisciplinary group of scholars. The question structure and response choices were evaluated by a double-blind peer review and vetted by the ethics committee of the ESMIC. Previous to its use with the ESMIC population, the survey had two external rounds of preliminary trials with military personnel and two internal rounds with voluntary students within the ESMIC to guarantee its understanding.

The survey was conducted over a two-day period to prevent any information from being released beforehand that would compromise the participants' disposition or spontaneity. Full anonymity was upheld to prevent possible apprehension by the students and guarantee truthful answers. The responses were collected using optical mark recognition (OMR) software and corroborated by hand to avoid clerical errors. Semi-structured interviews with 20% of the respondents were administered the week after the initial processing of the data to detect possible errors of interpretation or apathy when answering the questions.

Participants and measures

At the time of the study (May 2018), the population of the ESMIC was composed of 1,402 students (named Cadets from the first to the third year, and Ensigns during the fourth year) where 1,105 (79%) students were male, and 297 (21%) were female (Table 1). All of the students were invited to participate voluntarily in the study without receiving any retribution. The number of final participants was 1,120 students (80% of the total ESMIC population), 886 men (80% of the total ESMIC's male population) and 234 women (79% of the total ESMIC female population).

The study gathered information on six areas of interest 1) Socio-demographic characteristics; 2) Professional behavior; 3) Social patterns; 4) Military values; 5) Civil-military relations; and 6) Integration of women in the military. Each area was divided into two or more sub-areas; the sub-areas included two or more questions. Most of the responses were rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, 1 being, strongly agree, and 5 strong-

ly disagree, while others required an open-end scheme, for example, “What is your place of birth? (SD5-1)”.

Table 1. Distribution of women and men among the academic levels at the ESMIC

ESMIC's academic level	ESMIC's students (total)		ESMIC'S participants	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
I	233	56	184 (79%)	45 (80%)
II	130	34	104 (80%)	26 (76%)
III	70	34	55 (79%)	27 (80%)
IV	70	21	57 (81%)	16 (78%)
V	153	28	122 (80%)	22 (79%)
VI	234	72	192 (82%)	56 (78%)
VII	111	26	89 (80%)	21 (81%)
VIII	104	26	83 (80%)	21 (80%)
Total	1,105	297	886 (80%)	234 (79%)

Source: prepared by the authors

Socio-demographic characteristics

This area collected data on the background of each respondent to determine patterns of thought, feelings, comportment, and geographical origins. It was divided into the following eight sub-areas: 1) Individual profile (coded SD1); 2) Family structure (SD2); 3) Religious beliefs (SD3); 4) Income (SD4); 5) Birthplace (SD5); 6) Education (SD6); 7) Occupation (SD7); and 8) Professional endogamy (SD8). Through 46 questions, such as “What is your ethnicity? (SD1-4)”, “What are your religious beliefs? (SD3-1)”; “What is your family’s gross monthly income? (SD4-2)”; or “What is the highest academic degree achieved by your mother? (SD6-8)” we attempted to establish a feasible basis for understanding tendencies among the students and the potential impact of this information on their social interaction and military career (Table 1).

The questions were constructed using the sustained practices presented in a large volume of published studies such as those by Caforio and Martinez (2005); Caforio (2006b); Griffiths, Wardle, Orford, Sproston and Erens (2008); García Castro and Barrantes Umaña (2017); and Phelps, Steel, Metcalf and Alkemade (2018).

Table 1. Means, standard deviations, and standard error among the first group of measures (Socio-democratic characteristics)

Variable	Socio-demographic characteristics														
	Individual profile (SD1)					Family structure (SD2)					Religious beliefs (SD3)				
	SD1-1	SD1-2	SD1-3	SD1-4	SD1-5	SD2-1	SD2-2	SD2-3	SD2-4	SD2-5	SD2-6	SD3-1	SD3-2	SD3-3	SD3-4
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	569	1,120	991	951	1,077	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	3.64	4.32	1.21	2.94	4.44	4.51	1.72	1.04	1.88	1.73	2.26	2.03	2.08	2.21	1.27
SD	1.56	2.38	0.41	1.04	1.75	0.50	0.45	0.20	0.93	0.97	1.12	1.20	0.75	1.18	0.58
SE	0.05	0.07	0.01	0.03	0.05	0.01	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.02	0.04	0.02

Continuation 1

Variable	Socio-demographic characteristics													
	Income (SD4)				Birthplace (SD5)				Education (SD6)					
	SD4-1	SD4-2	SD4-3	SD4-4	SD5-1	SD5-2	SD5-3	SD5-4	SD6-1	SD6-2	SD6-3	SD6-4	SD6-5	SD6-6
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	551	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	1.83	2.71	2.79	14.86	15.97	15.62	2.90	1.66	2.87	3.42	4.09	4.78	5.09	4.34
SD	0.38	0.98	0.62	9.97	10.08	9.99	1.37	0.66	0.44	0.63	1.39	1.67	1.98	1.48
SE	0.01	0.03	0.02	0.30	0.30	0.30	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.02	0.06	0.05	0.06	0.04

Continuation 2

Variable	Socio-demographic characteristics													
	Occupation (SD7)							Professional endogamy (SD8)						
	SD7-1	SD7-2	SD7-3	SD7-4	SD7-5	SD7-6	SD8-1	SD8-2	SD8-3	SD8-4	SD8-5	SD8-6	SD8-7	SD8-8
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	1.51	2.05	4.78	1.93	1.75	4.70	3.75	2.20	4.37	1.58	1.78	1.68	1.63	2.09
SD	0.95	1.17	2.11	1.31	0.87	1.99	1.73	1.53	1.39	1.26	0.41	1.34	0.48	1.50
SE	0.03	0.03	0.06	0.04	0.03	0.06	0.05	0.05	0.04	0.04	0.01	0.04	0.01	0.04

Source: Prepared by the authors

Social patterns

For this area, we used major studies such as those by Caforio and Martinez (2005); Martinez (2007); Ross (2017); Trail, Meadows, Miles and Karney (2017); Coser (2017); Van Voorhees, E., Wagner, H., Beckham, J., Bradford, D., Neal, L., Penk, W., and Elbogen, E. B. (2018); Chaban, Beltyukova and Fox (2018); and Verweijen (2018) to

structure 29 questions, divided into three sub-areas, which were assigned codes. They were 1) Service (S1); 2) Ideology (S2); and 3) Diversity (S3).

By enquiring on topics such as “How important is serving the community for you? (S1-1)” or “Do you agree, disagree or are you apathetic to the death penalty? (S2-2),” we aimed to determine the actions of the students and their relationships with other individuals (Table 2).

Table 2. Means, standard deviations, and standard error among the second group of measures (Social patterns)

Social patterns									
Service									
Variable	S1-1	S1-2	S1-3	S1-4	S1-5	S1-6	S1-7	S1-8	S1-9
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	1.29	1.51	1.38	1.62	1.29	1.36	1.27	1.53	1.17
SD	0.62	0.69	0.67	0.72	0.61	0.62	0.58	0.70	0.44
SE	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.01

Continuation 1

Social patterns											
Ideology											
Variable	S2-1	S2-2	S2-3	S2-4	S2-5	S2-6	S2-7	S2-8	S2-9	S2-10	S2-11
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	1.31	1.46	2.04	1.40	1.46	1.83	1.59	2.11	1.45	1.69	2.13
SD	0.63	0.68	0.60	0.71	0.79	0.84	0.81	0.58	0.74	0.86	0.74
SE	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.02

Continuation 2

Social patterns									
Diversity									
Variable	S3-1	S3-2	S3-3	S3-4	S3-5	S3-6	S3-7	S3-8	S3-9
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	1.35	2.25	2.86	1.70	2.16	3.13	2.42	1.93	2.41
SD	0.66	1.08	0.98	0.84	1.03	0.96	0.99	0.89	0.96
SE	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03

Source: Prepared by the authors

Military values

This area was structured using influential literature such as the research by Huntington (1963); Janowitz (1971, 1977); Moskos (1973); Caforio (2006a); Kier (2017); Brænder and Holsting (2017); Jansen and Kramer (2018); Hicks, Bell and Gray (2018); Joachim, Martin, Lange, Schneiker and Dau (2018); and Abrahamsen (2018).

It was divided into four coded sub-areas: 1) Teamwork (M1); 2) Discipline (M2); Integrity (M3); and Leadership (M4), and included 22 questions such as “How important is to encourage initiative among subordinates? (M1-4)” or “Do you think that the higher the rank of a superior, the better the leader? (M2-4)” (Table 3).

Table 3. Means, standard deviations, and standard error among the third group of measures (military values)

Variable	Military values											
	Teamwork						Discipline					
	M1-1	M1-2	M1-3	M1-4	M1-5	M2-1	M2-2	M2-3	M2-4	M2-5	M2-6	M2-7
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	4.35	4.49	4.15	4.39	4.58	2.43	3.37	3.27	2.64	2.15	1.85	2.71
SD	1.06	1.03	1.03	1.03	0.89	1.00	1.28	1.29	0.98	0.90	0.87	0.96
SE	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03

Continuation 1

Variable	Military values									
	Integrity					Leadership				
	M3-1	M3-2	M3-3	M3-4	M4-1	M4-2	M4-3	M4-4	M4-5	M4-6
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,087	1,120
Mean	1.25	1.68	1.72	1.97	2.52	2.72	2.93	2.80	2.75	3.21
SD	0.63	0.80	0.78	0.81	1.17	0.98	0.71	0.82	1.20	1.28
SE	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.04	0.04

Source: Prepared by the authors

Professional behavior

In this area we sought to gather information regarding the conduct of respondents as a future Officer of the National Army of Colombia, aiming to establish the rationale behind their stimulus to serve. This area was divided into two sub-areas: 1) Motivation (P1); and 2) Vocation (P2). It consisted of 13 questions, including questions such as “Before joining the ESMIC, how often were military issues discussed in your family? (P1-1)” and “What makes you trust more in a member of your military unit? (P2-5)” (Table 4).

The questionnaire was designed using a similar pattern to the one used in the analyses of Islas (2014); Cruz Piñero, Vargas Valle, Hernández Robles and Rodríguez Chávez (2017); De Sousa Almeida, Taboada Ares, Rivas Torres, Iglesias Souto and López Gómez (2017); Izquierdo Martínez, Ledo Royo and Montoya Rivera (2017); Hossain López and Orbañanos Peiro (2017); and Marin and Placencia (2017). More than a half of the responses were assessed on a 5-point Likert-type scale. The others, such as “Do you think that being a soldier is a vocation, like being a priest, or, on the contrary, is it a profession like being a lawyer or an engineer? (P2-1),” required closed-ended answers (yes-no).

Table 4. Means, standard deviations, and standard error among the fourth group of measures (Professional behavior)

Variable	Professional behavior												
	Motivation						Vocation						
	P1-1	P1-2	P1-3	P1-4	P1-5	P1-6	P1-7	P2-1	P2-2	P2-3	P2-4	P2-5	P2-6
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	2.33	3.48	3.53	1.72	2.10	1.93	1.91	1.10	1.89	1.76	1.18	2.53	2.66
SD	0.91	2.36	2.03	0.78	0.93	0.82	0.88	0.30	0.32	0.43	0.39	1.09	0.54
SE	0.03	0.07	0.06	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.03	0.02

Source: Prepared by the authors

Civil-military relations

This area was divided into two sub-areas: 1) Opinions and 2) Patriotism, with ten questions such as “What is your mother political tendency? (CM1-2)” or “What is your perception of patriotism in Colombia? (CM2-4).” Here, we tried to determine the understanding of civil-military relations, concepts, and characteristics of ESMIC students and their relatives (Table 5).

The questions were designed using the ideas of Bruneau (2005); Born (2006); Feaver (2005); Franke (2006); Harris and Nef (2008); Bruneau and Tollefson (2008); Pion-Berlin (2011); Egnell (2011); Cimbala (2012); Bruneau and Matei (2013); Angstrom (2013); Croissant and Kuehn (2017); Jonas (2018). Most of the responses were attained using the 5-point Likert-type scale.

Integration of women in the military

Here, we aimed to determine the advancements in female participation in the ESMIC by measuring the opinions and comportment of the students in four sub-areas: 1) Equity (IW1); Preparedness (IW2); Support (IW3); and Competitiveness (IW4) widely studied by authors such as Herbert (1998); Boldry, Wood and Kashy (2002); Wright (2015); King (2015); MacKenzie (2015); Duncanson and Woodward (2015); Jensen (2016); Segal, Smith, Segal and Canuso (2016); Moore (2017); Dahl, Kotsadam and Rooth (2018); and Wibben (2018).

This area had 30 questions, such as “How often do you think women are recognized for their achievements in the Army? (IW1-1)” or “Is it appropriate for women to lead units with tactical responsibilities in combat areas? (IW3-6),” which were answered using the 5-point Likert-type scale (Table 6).

Table 5. Means, standard deviations, and standard error among the fifth group of measures (Civil-military relations)

Variable	Civil-military relations									
	Opinions					Patriotism				
	CM1-1	CM1-2	CM1-3	CM1-4	CM2-1	CM2-2	CM2-3	CM2-4	CM2-5	CM2-6
N	1,120	1,120	974	551	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120
Mean	3.83	3.78	3.54	3.56	2.61	1.70	2.13	1.86	2.45	1.50
SD	1.10	1.05	1.15	1.14	0.98	0.92	0.76	0.67	0.92	0.93
SE	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.05	0.03	0.03	0.02	0.02	0.03	0.03

Source: Prepared by the authors

Table 6. Means, standard deviations, and standard error among the sixth group of measures (Integration of women in the military)

Variable	Integration of women in the military									
	Equity									
	IW1-1	IW1-2	IW1-3	IW1-4	IW1-5	IW1-6	IW1-7	IW1-8	IW1-9	IW1-10
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	85
Mean	2.25	2.42	3.62	2.30	2.29	4.24	2.68	3.39	3.34	3.02
SD	0.89	1.13	1.11	1.32	1.32	0.90	1.27	1.15	0.69	1.03
SE	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.02	0.11

Continuation 1

Variable	Integration of women in the military								
	Preparedness								
	IW2-1	IW2-2	IW2-3	IW2-4	IW2-5	IW2-6	IW2-7	IW2-8	
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	
Mean	2.12	1.80	2.29	2.12	2.14	2.06	2.82	3.28	
SD	1.01	0.86	0.91	0.86	0.95	0.93	0.98	0.94	
SE	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	

Table continues...

Continuation 2

Variable	Integration of women in the military											
	Support						Competitiveness					
	IW3-1	IW3-2	IW3-3	IW3-4	IW3-5	IW3-6	IW3-7	IW3-8	IW4-1	IW4-2	IW4-3	IW4-4
N	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	661	1,120	1,120	1,120	1,120	857
Mean	2.26	3.21	2.88	2.62	1.82	2.26	2.79	2.31	2.63	1.21	1.23	3.98
SD	0.97	1.18	0.92	1.03	0.90	1.13	1.01	1.18	1.01	0.41	0.42	2.21
SE	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.03	0.01	0.01	0.08

Source: Prepared by the authors

Final discussion

Despite the practical and theoretical importance of sociological studies of militaries, the amount of research in this field remains limited due to methodological constraints, especially in Latin America. New transformation trends, however, have shown that identifying personnel motivation and context is essential to maximize the impact of policies, such as the aforementioned gender equality policy. The 2018 military population dataset is, to our knowledge, the first attempt in Colombia to provide a model for gathering and analyzing data collected from a determined military community, that is, the ESMIC.

The methodology and data we introduce provide decision-makers and researchers with a feasible instrument to the study the military population at different levels. This dataset offers a systematic methodology to evaluate and measure six different areas: 1) Socio-demographic characteristics; 2) Professional behavior; 3) Social patterns; 4) Military values; 5) Civil-military relations; and 6) Integration of women in the military. Researchers may focus on a particular area of interest to study its foundations and implications by controlling different variables while protecting the respondents' anonymity. Given the diverse possibilities this dataset offer, we envision many potential applications to develop an understanding of the education perspectives of future Army Officers.

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