



# American Journal of Arts and Human Science (AJAHS)

ISSN: 2832-451X (ONLINE)

**VOLUME 5 ISSUE 2 (2026)**



PUBLISHED BY  
E-PALLI PUBLISHERS, DELAWARE, USA

## A Multidimensional Competency-Based Framework for Defining the Optimal Military Profile in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

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### Article Information

**Received:** April 01, 2024**Accepted:** October 25, 2024**Published:** April 24, 2026

### Keywords

*Armed Forces, Competency-Based Approach, Democratic Republic Congo, Military Profile, Military Recruitment, Multidimensional Assessment, Psychophysical Competencies*

### ABSTRACT

This study examines the definition of an optimal military profile for recruitment within the armed forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), in a context marked by persistent regional instability, internal conflicts, and emerging security threats. Strengthening military effectiveness requires a rigorous and competency-based selection of recruits capable of responding to these complex challenges. The main objective of this research is to evaluate existing admission criteria and identify the psychophysical competencies necessary for modern military performance. To achieve this, a qualitative and analytical methodology was adopted, combining documentary analysis, comparative review of recruitment practices, and critical assessment of current selection systems in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). The findings reveal significant gaps in the recruitment process, including corruption, insufficient qualified human resources, and logistical constraints, especially in remote areas. Moreover, current assessment methods remain largely traditional and insufficiently adapted to contemporary military demands. The study highlights the need for a multidimensional approach integrating physical, psychological, cognitive, and technological competencies. In response, the research proposes the modernization of recruitment procedures through the integration of advanced evaluation technologies, collaboration with military psychology experts, and the implementation of continuous training programs. Particular emphasis is placed on regular psychological monitoring of soldiers to ensure resilience in hostile environments. In conclusion, adopting a competency-based and multidimensional framework is essential for building a more effective, adaptive, and professional military force in the DRC.

### INTRODUCTION

The Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) occupy a central position in safeguarding national sovereignty, protecting civilians, and maintaining internal and regional stability. Since the country's independence, the DRC has experienced recurrent conflicts, persistent insecurity, and complex geopolitical tensions that have continuously tested the effectiveness of its military institution. The FARDC must therefore operate in a challenging environment characterized by internal rebellions, interethnic violence, terrorism, and the illegal exploitation of natural resources by armed groups (Stearns, 2011). In such a context, the army must not only ensure territorial defense but also contribute to peacekeeping efforts and collaborate with international actors to restore stability (UNSC, 2019). These evolving responsibilities require a military force that is not only numerically sufficient but also highly competent, adaptable, and resilient.

Despite this strategic importance, the recruitment and selection processes within the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) continue to face significant limitations that raise concerns about the overall effectiveness of the military institution. Modern security threats, including asymmetric warfare, terrorism, and technologically advanced conflicts, demand soldiers who possess a combination of physical strength,

psychological resilience, cognitive capacity, and technical expertise. However, current recruitment practices in the DRC often rely on limited evaluation criteria that prioritize basic physical abilities while neglecting essential psychophysical and cognitive competencies (Baaz & al, 2018). Moreover, systemic challenges such as corruption, favouritism, insufficient infrastructure, and logistical constraints in remote areas further compromise the integrity and rigor of the selection process (Tull, 2018). These issues contribute to the recruitment of underqualified personnel, which weakens military performance and undermines national security.

This situation persists largely because the recruitment system lacks a comprehensive and standardized framework that integrates multidimensional competencies aligned with modern military requirements. Existing evaluation methods remain outdated and fail to incorporate advances in military psychology, technology-based assessments, and competency-based approaches. In addition, limited resources and institutional weaknesses hinder the implementation of rigorous selection procedures, while political and ethnic influences continue to interfere with merit-based recruitment. As a result, the gap between the demands of contemporary warfare and the actual capabilities of recruited soldiers remains significant, preventing the FARDC from fully achieving operational effectiveness in complex conflict environments

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(Autesserre, 2010; Reyntjens, 2009).

In response to these challenges, this study proposes a multidimensional and competency-based framework for defining an optimal military profile in the DRC. The research aims to identify the essential psychophysical, cognitive, and technical competencies required for modern military operations and to critically assess the current recruitment and evaluation methods used within the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). To achieve this objective, the study adopts a qualitative and analytical approach based on documentary analysis and comparative evaluation of existing practices. It then formulates practical recommendations to modernize recruitment processes through the integration of advanced assessment technologies, the strengthening of merit-based selection criteria, and the involvement of military psychology experts. The study also emphasizes the importance of continuous training programs and regular psychological monitoring to enhance soldiers' adaptability, resilience, and performance in hostile environments.

The present study follows a structured and progressive organization that reflects the logical development of the study. It begins with an introduction that establishes the research context, outlines the problem, and defines the objectives of the study. The next section examines the psychophysical competencies required for an optimal military profile, with particular emphasis on both physical and psychological dimensions essential for effective military performance. The third section analyses the current candidate evaluation techniques within the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, highlighting their strengths and limitations in relation to modern military demands. The fourth section explores the major structural, logistical, and socio-political challenges that affect the recruitment process in the DRC. The fifth section proposes strategic adjustments and reforms, including the strengthening of selection criteria, the modernization of evaluation methods, and the integration of continuous training and psychological monitoring. Finally, the article presents a discussion of the results and concludes by summarizing the key findings, contributions, and implications of the study for improving military effectiveness in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and comparable contexts.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This study adopts a qualitative and analytical research design to examine military recruitment practices in the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) and to define a multidimensional competency-based framework for an optimal military profile. The research focuses on understanding the existing recruitment system, identifying its limitations, and proposing practical improvements aligned with contemporary military requirements. Given the complexity of the subject, which involves institutional, psychological, technical, and socio-political dimensions, a qualitative approach allows for a

comprehensive and in-depth analysis of the phenomenon under study.

The study relies primarily on documentary analysis as its main data collection method. The researcher systematically reviews a wide range of academic publications, institutional reports, policy documents, and previous empirical studies related to military recruitment, psychophysical competencies, and security sector reforms. This approach enables the identification of theoretical models, best practices, and comparative insights from both African and international military systems. The analysis also incorporates reports from international organizations and research institutions that provide relevant data on security challenges, recruitment practices, and military performance in the DRC and similar contexts. By triangulating these sources, the study ensures the reliability and validity of the information used in the analysis. In addition to documentary analysis, the research adopts a comparative analytical approach. The study compares recruitment practices in the DRC with those observed in other African countries and selected Western military systems. This comparison highlights both common principles and contextual differences in recruitment standards, evaluation techniques, and training systems. It also allows the researcher to identify gaps in the FARDC recruitment framework and to draw lessons from more advanced or better-structured military institutions. The comparative dimension strengthens the analytical depth of the study and supports the formulation of relevant and realistic recommendations.

The analytical framework of the study is structured around a competency-based approach. The research identifies key dimensions of military competence, including physical, psychological, cognitive, and technical competencies, and evaluates how these dimensions are currently assessed within the FARDC recruitment system. The study then examines the extent to which these competencies align with the demands of modern military operations, such as asymmetric warfare, counterterrorism, and peacekeeping missions. This framework enables a systematic evaluation of both the strengths and weaknesses of the current recruitment process. To ensure coherence and rigor, the study follows a logical analytical process. First, it defines the conceptual foundations of military recruitment and competency-based evaluation. Second, it analyses current recruitment practices and identifies their structural and operational limitations. Third, it evaluates the relevance of psychophysical and technical competencies in relation to contemporary military challenges. Finally, it proposes a set of reforms aimed at improving recruitment effectiveness through modernization, standardization, and the integration of advanced evaluation methods.

Despite its strengths, the methodology presents certain limitations. The study relies primarily on secondary data, which may limit the ability to capture real-time operational dynamics within the FARDC. In addition, the absence of field-based empirical data, such as interviews or surveys with military personnel, restricts the possibility

of validating certain assumptions through direct observation. However, the use of diverse and credible sources, combined with a rigorous analytical framework, helps mitigate these limitations and ensures the overall reliability of the study. In conclusion, this methodological approach provides a robust foundation for analysing military recruitment in the DRC and for proposing a multidimensional competency-based framework. It combines theoretical insights, comparative analysis, and contextual understanding to generate practical and scientifically grounded recommendations aimed at improving the effectiveness of the FARDC.

### **Psychophysical Skills for an Optimal Military Profile**

The recruitment of soldiers into the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) requires a rigorous and multidimensional evaluation of psychophysical competencies. These competencies combine physical capabilities and psychological attributes that enable soldiers to operate effectively in complex and hostile environments. In the context of the DRC, where armed forces face asymmetric warfare, terrorism, and prolonged internal conflicts, the need for well-balanced psychophysical profiles becomes essential. Soldiers must demonstrate not only physical strength and endurance but also mental resilience, emotional stability, and disciplined behaviour to meet the demands of modern military operations (Baaz & al, 2018). A comprehensive assessment of these competencies therefore constitutes a fundamental step in building a professional, adaptive, and operationally effective army.

The physical dimension of military competence remains a cornerstone of operational readiness, particularly in a country characterized by vast territory and diverse geographical conditions. The DRC presents a uniquely challenging environment that includes dense tropical forests, mountainous regions, plateaus, and marshlands, often combined with extreme climatic conditions such as high humidity, intense heat, and heavy rainfall (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). These environmental realities require recruits to possess exceptional physical fitness adapted to local conditions. Soldiers must sustain long-distance movements across difficult terrain, often under logistical constraints and without adequate rest. Physical stamina allows them to maintain operational effectiveness during extended missions, while endurance ensures their ability to withstand prolonged exposure to physically demanding situations without significant performance decline (Stearns, 2011). Strength also plays a critical role, as soldiers must carry heavy equipment, handle weapons efficiently, and perform physically intensive tasks in both combat and support operations (Tull, 2018). At the same time, agility enables rapid and precise movement in unpredictable environments, particularly in dense forests or irregular terrains where mobility determines tactical advantage (Stearns & al., 2013).

Physical fitness in the DRC must also reflect the specific geographic and climatic constraints of the operational

environment. Soldiers frequently operate in areas where tropical diseases, isolation, and environmental hazards increase the physical burden of military service. Therefore, recruitment processes must evaluate candidates' ability to resist fatigue, adapt to extreme temperatures, and function effectively in diverse altitudes, including mountainous regions such as the Kivu highlands (Autesserre, 2010). When compared to other military systems, these requirements reveal both similarities and contextual differences. Many African and international armed forces emphasize endurance, strength, and agility as core selection criteria. However, countries such as Kenya prioritize speed and mobility due to counterterrorism operations, while Western armies increasingly integrate technological simulations into physical assessments to evaluate performance in complex operational scenarios (Heineken, 2016; Griffin, 2019). In contrast, the DRC must tailor its recruitment standards to its unique environmental and geopolitical realities while progressively integrating modern evaluation techniques. Beyond physical attributes, psychological competencies represent an equally critical dimension in defining an effective military profile within the FARDC. Soldiers operate in environments marked by uncertainty, violence, and prolonged exposure to stress, which require strong mental capacities. Recruitment must therefore identify candidates who demonstrate high levels of mental resilience, effective stress management, discipline, and emotional stability. Mental resilience allows soldiers to endure prolonged conflict, recover from traumatic experiences, and maintain operational focus despite adversity (Tull, 2018). Stress management enables recruits to make rational decisions under pressure, which proves essential in combat situations where errors may have fatal consequences (Sweeney *et al.*, 2015). Discipline ensures adherence to military protocols and strengthens unit cohesion, while emotional stability allows soldiers to regulate their reactions and avoid impulsive or harmful behaviours in high-risk situations (Nzongola, 2002).

To ensure an objective and reliable evaluation of these psychological competencies, the integration of standardized psychometric assessment tools becomes necessary. Instruments such as resilience scales, stress management inventories, self-control assessments, and personality measures provide valuable insights into candidates' psychological profiles. For instance, resilience scales assess the ability to recover from adversity, while stress inventories evaluate coping mechanisms under pressure (Connor & Davidson, 2003; Lazarus & Folkman, 1984). Similarly, self-control measures help determine a candidate's capacity to maintain discipline, and personality inventories assess emotional stability through indicators such as neuroticism (Tangney *et al.*, 2004; John *et al.*, 2008). The systematic use of such tools can significantly enhance the reliability and validity of recruitment processes within the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC).

Finally, mental health emerges as a decisive factor in

sustaining military effectiveness in difficult operational environments. Soldiers in the DRC frequently encounter traumatic events, including combat exposure, loss of comrades, and civilian violence, which may lead to psychological distress if not properly addressed. Poor mental health can reduce operational performance, increase the risk of errors, and compromise both individual and collective safety (Sweeney *et al.*, 2015). Therefore, military institutions must implement continuous psychological monitoring and support systems to preserve soldiers' well-being and operational readiness. Preventive measures, including regular psychological evaluations and resilience training programs, can strengthen soldiers' capacity to cope with prolonged stress and enhance their long-term effectiveness (Baaz & al, 2018). In sum, defining an optimal military profile within the FARDC requires the integration of both physical and psychological competencies into a coherent and multidimensional framework. Only by combining rigorous physical preparation, advanced psychological assessment, and sustained mental health support can the armed forces develop soldiers capable of responding effectively to the complex and evolving security challenges of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

#### **Current Military Evaluation Systems in the DRC**

The evaluation of candidates within the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) aims to ensure that recruits possess the physical, psychological, cognitive, and technical competencies required to operate effectively in a demanding and complex security environment. In principle, the recruitment system seeks to identify individuals capable of responding to the realities of modern military operations, including asymmetric conflicts, terrorism, and prolonged instability. However, in practice, the current evaluation framework places predominant emphasis on physical testing, while psychological, cognitive, and technical dimensions remain insufficiently explored or only superficially assessed (Baaz & al, 2018). This imbalance limits the capacity of the recruitment system to identify well-rounded candidates who can meet the multidimensional demands of contemporary warfare.

Physical evaluation methods constitute the core of the current selection process. Recruiters subject candidates to a series of standardized tests designed to measure endurance, strength, agility, and general physical fitness. These tests reflect the operational realities of the DRC, where soldiers must navigate vast territories characterized by difficult terrain and harsh climatic conditions (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Endurance tests, such as long-distance running and load-bearing marches, assess the ability of recruits to sustain prolonged physical effort under fatigue. Strength assessments, including exercises such as push-ups, pull-ups, and squats, evaluate muscular capacity and the ability to handle heavy equipment during military operations (Tull, 2018). Agility tests, often conducted through obstacle courses, measure

coordination, speed, and responsiveness in dynamic environments, which proves essential in both rural and urban combat scenarios (Griffin, 2019). These physical evaluations play an important role in filtering candidates who lack the minimum physical capacity required for military service.

Despite their relevance, a critical analysis reveals several limitations in the current physical testing system. Existing tests often fail to reflect the evolving nature of modern conflicts, which increasingly require cognitive adaptability, technological proficiency, and decision-making under uncertainty. The uniform application of physical tests to all candidates, regardless of their intended specialization, further reduces the effectiveness of the selection process. For example, candidates applying for technical, intelligence, or logistical roles undergo the same physical evaluations as combat-oriented recruits, even though their future responsibilities require different skill sets. Moreover, current tests rarely simulate real operational conditions, such as urban warfare environments or complex asymmetric conflict scenarios, where psychological endurance and situational awareness are as important as physical strength (Baaz, 2018). As a result, the selection process may exclude potentially valuable candidates while admitting individuals who lack essential non-physical competencies.

To enhance the effectiveness of candidate selection, the recruitment process must integrate comprehensive psychological and cognitive evaluation methods. Modern military operations demand soldiers who can think critically, make rapid and informed decisions, and maintain emotional control under extreme pressure. Psychometric tools offer a reliable means of assessing these competencies. Standardized instruments, such as personality inventories and cognitive reasoning tests, enable recruiters to evaluate traits such as emotional stability, decision-making capacity, and resilience (Gibby & al, 2008; Frederick, 2005). In addition, structured psychological interviews conducted by trained professionals provide deeper insight into candidates' behavioural patterns, teamwork abilities, and capacity to function in high-stress environments (Zyphur & al., 2016). These qualitative assessments complement quantitative test results and contribute to a more holistic understanding of each candidate's suitability for military service.

Decision-making and leadership abilities also constitute critical dimensions of military competence. Recruits must demonstrate the capacity to analyse complex situations, balance ethical considerations, and act decisively under pressure. Simulation-based assessments, including situational judgment tests and scenario-based exercises, allow recruiters to observe how candidates respond to realistic operational challenges (Lievens & al., 2008). These methods provide valuable insights into leadership potential, communication skills, and the ability to manage teams effectively in uncertain environments. Leadership evaluation should not only focus on authority but also on

the capacity to motivate others, maintain cohesion, and ensure mission success in difficult conditions (Tull, 2018). Mental health represents another essential component of the evaluation process. Soldiers in the DRC frequently encounter traumatic experiences that can negatively affect their psychological well-being and operational performance. Without proper assessment and support, mental health issues may lead to decreased effectiveness, increased risk of errors, and potential harm to both individuals and units (Maguen *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, recruitment systems must incorporate mental health screening as well as long-term psychological support mechanisms. Regular consultations with military psychologists, combined with preventive interventions such as resilience training and counselling programs, can significantly improve both individual well-being and collective performance (Zyphur *et al.*, 2016).

In addition to physical and psychological dimensions, technical and academic competencies play a decisive role in defining an optimal military profile. Modern warfare increasingly relies on advanced technologies, sophisticated weapon systems, and complex strategic planning. Consequently, recruits must demonstrate a solid understanding of military technologies, including communication systems, intelligence management, and emerging tools such as drones and cyber defense systems (Strachan, 2016). Practical evaluations, simulations, and technical knowledge tests can help identify candidates capable of operating effectively in technologically advanced environments.

Academic and professional training also remain essential, particularly for military officers who must assume leadership and strategic responsibilities. Officers require strong intellectual abilities, including knowledge of geopolitics, international relations, and conflict management, as well as advanced leadership skills. Many modern armed forces establish rigorous academic requirements for officer recruitment, often requiring university-level education and continuous professional development (Ekekwe, 2015). Continuous training programs ensure that officers remain adaptable to evolving military technologies and operational contexts, thereby strengthening institutional effectiveness (Chene-Bougeries & al, 2017). Leadership evaluation should therefore combine academic assessment, practical simulations, and behavioural analysis to ensure that selected candidates possess both intellectual and managerial competencies.

A comparative perspective further highlights the need for reform in the FARDC recruitment system. In several African countries, such as South Africa and Nigeria, recruitment processes integrate both physical and academic criteria, while emphasizing strategic and technical competencies (Heineken, 2019). In Western military systems, recruitment standards include advanced academic requirements, technological training, and comprehensive psychological assessments to ensure that officers and soldiers can operate in

highly complex environments (Goldman, 2016). These models demonstrate the importance of adopting a multidimensional evaluation framework that aligns recruitment practices with contemporary military demands.

In summary, the current candidate evaluation techniques within the FARDC remain largely centered on physical testing and fail to fully address the multidimensional nature of modern military competence. A more balanced and integrated approach, combining physical, psychological, cognitive, technical, and academic assessments, is essential to improve recruitment quality. By adopting such a framework, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) can strengthen its capacity to select competent, resilient, and adaptable soldiers capable of responding effectively to the evolving security challenges of the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### **Current Challenges in Military Recruitment in the DRC**

Military recruitment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) faces a complex set of structural, logistical, and socio-political challenges that significantly affect the quality and effectiveness of the Armed Forces (FARDC). The vast geographical size of the country, combined with limited infrastructure and persistent insecurity in several regions, complicates the implementation of a standardized and rigorous recruitment system. These constraints hinder the identification, evaluation, and selection of qualified candidates, thereby weakening the overall capacity of the armed forces to respond effectively to contemporary security threats (Vlassenroot & al, 2004).

Logistical constraints and inadequate infrastructure constitute one of the most critical obstacles to effective recruitment. The DRC covers an extensive territory where transport networks remain poorly developed, particularly in rural and isolated regions. Many areas become inaccessible during the rainy season, which restricts the mobility of recruitment teams and limits access to potential candidates. As a result, recruitment operations often rely on improvised methods that compromise the rigor of candidate evaluation. In many locations, recruitment centers lack the necessary facilities and equipment to conduct comprehensive physical and psychological assessments. Recruiters frequently operate without standardized testing environments, which reduces the reliability of physical evaluations and allows candidates to pass without meeting optimal fitness standards (Tull, 2018). Similarly, the absence of appropriate infrastructure for psychological assessment prevents the effective use of psychometric tools and professional evaluation techniques. Recruiters often depend on superficial interviews or brief observations, which fail to detect underlying psychological vulnerabilities that may affect performance in high-risk military contexts (Kabwe-Segatti, 2012).

Geographical isolation and insecurity further complicate recruitment efforts, particularly in remote and conflict-affected regions. Provinces such as North Kivu, South Kivu, and Ituri present significant accessibility challenges due to rugged terrain, limited transportation infrastructure, and ongoing armed violence. Recruitment teams must often travel under dangerous conditions, which increases operational costs and limits the frequency of recruitment campaigns. At the same time, the presence of armed groups discourages potential candidates from participating in recruitment processes due to fear of violence, displacement, or retaliation (Stearns, 2011). In addition, limited communication channels and weak public awareness campaigns reduce the visibility of recruitment opportunities in these regions. Many potential recruits remain uninformed about eligibility criteria, procedures, and career prospects within the military, which leads to low participation rates and underrepresentation of certain regions within the armed forces. Once recruited, individuals from remote areas may face integration difficulties due to disparities in training quality, cultural differences, and insufficient preparation for modern military operations.

The shortage of qualified professionals involved in the recruitment process further undermines the effectiveness of candidate selection. Recruitment teams often consist of military personnel who have not received specialized training in modern evaluation techniques, including psychometric assessment and competency-based selection. This lack of expertise limits the ability of recruiters to objectively assess candidates' physical, psychological, and cognitive capacities (Tull, 2018). In particular, the absence of psychologists and psychometric specialists represents a major gap in the recruitment system. Without professional psychological evaluation, the armed forces risk admitting candidates who lack the mental resilience, emotional stability, or decision-making capacity required for military service in complex environments (Kabwe-Segatti, 2012). Financial constraints exacerbate these challenges by limiting investments in training, infrastructure, and recruitment campaigns. Insufficient funding also affects working conditions within the military, which may discourage highly qualified individuals from pursuing a military career and reduce the overall attractiveness of the armed forces (Stearns, 2011).

Corruption and nepotism represent another critical barrier to effective recruitment. In some cases, recruitment processes become influenced by personal connections, political affiliations, or financial incentives, rather than merit and competence. Such practices distort candidate selection and allow underqualified individuals to enter the armed forces, thereby weakening institutional effectiveness and operational performance (Nzongola-Ntalaja, 2002). Corruption undermines trust in military institutions, reduces morale among recruits, and creates divisions within military units. When individuals gain entry through favouritism rather than competence,

they often lack the necessary preparation for military duties and may pose risks to both themselves and their colleagues. Consequently, the integrity of the recruitment system becomes compromised, and the ability of the FARDC to build a professional and disciplined force is significantly reduced.

Ethnic tensions and broader social dynamics also influence recruitment processes in the DRC. The country's cultural diversity, while a potential strength, can become a source of division when recruitment practices fail to remain neutral and inclusive. In regions affected by ethnic conflicts, local actors may attempt to influence recruitment in favour of specific groups, thereby undermining fairness and cohesion within the armed forces (Vlassenroot & al, 2004). Such practices can create mistrust among recruits and weaken unit cohesion, which is essential for effective military operations. In addition, social perceptions of the military profession, particularly in rural areas, may discourage participation. Negative associations with the armed forces, including past abuses or limited career opportunities, reduce public confidence and limit the pool of potential recruits. Gender dynamics also play a role, as cultural norms in certain regions continue to restrict women's participation in military recruitment, despite their potential contribution to operational effectiveness.

Given these multidimensional challenges, structural reforms emerge as an essential priority for improving military recruitment in the DRC. Strengthening infrastructure represents a fundamental step, including the development of well-equipped recruitment centers, improved transportation networks, and modern training facilities. Enhancing human resources within the recruitment system is equally important. The armed forces must invest in the training of recruiters, integrate psychologists and evaluation specialists into recruitment teams, and standardize assessment procedures across all regions to ensure fairness and consistency. Increasing transparency and accountability mechanisms can help reduce corruption and restore trust in the recruitment process. At the same time, targeted awareness campaigns, particularly in remote and conflict-affected areas, can improve public understanding of military careers and encourage broader participation (Stearns, 2011).

In conclusion, the challenges affecting military recruitment in the DRC are complex but not insurmountable. By addressing logistical constraints, strengthening institutional capacity, promoting merit-based selection, and fostering social inclusion, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) can significantly improve the quality of its recruitment system. Such reforms will not only enhance operational effectiveness but also contribute to rebuilding public confidence in the military institution and strengthening national and regional security.

## Contemporary Military Recruitment Reforms in the DRC

Military recruitment in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) must undergo significant transformation to respond effectively to the evolving nature of contemporary conflicts. Modern warfare increasingly involves asymmetric threats, terrorism, and complex peacekeeping operations, all of which demand a more adaptable, resilient, and technically competent military force. In this context, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) must revise their recruitment framework by strengthening selection criteria, modernizing evaluation methods, and promoting continuous professional development. Such adjustments will ensure that recruits possess the competencies required to operate efficiently in dynamic and high-risk environments.

A first essential reform concerns the strengthening of selection criteria. Current recruitment standards do not consistently reflect the demands of modern military operations, which require a combination of physical endurance, psychological resilience, and mission-specific skills. Therefore, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) must establish more rigorous and context-sensitive criteria to identify candidates who can perform effectively under extreme conditions. Physical evaluation should systematically include endurance tests, load-bearing exercises, and agility assessments that simulate real operational environments. Soldiers must demonstrate their ability to operate in diverse terrains, such as dense forests, mountainous regions, and urban areas, often under harsh climatic conditions. These physical requirements ensure that recruits can sustain prolonged missions and maintain operational effectiveness in unpredictable situations.

At the same time, psychological evaluation must receive equal importance. Soldiers operate under intense stress and face prolonged exposure to violence and uncertainty. Recruitment processes must therefore include standardized psychometric assessments to evaluate mental resilience, emotional stability, discipline, and decision-making capacity under pressure (Britt & al., 2006). Candidates must demonstrate the ability to remain calm, follow orders, and function effectively within a team in high-risk situations. Strengthening psychological criteria will reduce behavioural risks and improve both individual performance and collective cohesion within military units.

In addition, recruitment criteria must reflect the diversity of military missions. A single, uniform selection model cannot adequately address the varied demands of peacekeeping operations, counterterrorism missions, and special operations. For peacekeeping roles, recruitment should emphasize interpersonal communication, conflict resolution skills, and cultural sensitivity, as soldiers frequently interact with civilian populations in fragile environments. Simulated scenarios involving civilian engagement can help evaluate candidates' capacity to

manage tension and respond appropriately to unpredictable situations. In contrast, counterterrorism and special operations require advanced physical conditioning, rapid decision-making, and technical proficiency. Candidates for these roles must demonstrate the ability to operate autonomously, use advanced equipment, and respond effectively to high-intensity threats. Tailoring selection criteria to mission requirements will significantly improve operational performance and reduce failure rates in specialized missions.

Beyond strengthening criteria, the modernization of evaluation methods represents a critical dimension of recruitment reform. Traditional assessment approaches no longer suffice to capture the complexity of modern military competencies. The integration of advanced technologies can significantly improve the accuracy and objectivity of candidate evaluation. Virtual simulation systems, for instance, allow recruiters to expose candidates to realistic operational scenarios and assess their decision-making abilities under stress. These immersive environments provide valuable insights into how recruits respond to dynamic and unpredictable situations, including combat engagements, rescue operations, and crisis management (Peterson & al, 2021). In parallel, the use of biometric monitoring tools during physical tests can generate precise data on endurance, recovery, and overall physical performance, enabling a more comprehensive and individualized assessment of candidates.

Collaboration with specialists in human resources and military psychology also plays a crucial role in improving recruitment processes. Psychologists contribute to the development of reliable psychometric instruments that measure key attributes such as resilience, emotional regulation, and stress tolerance. Their expertise ensures that psychological evaluations remain scientifically grounded and adapted to military realities (Cameron, 2017). Human resource professionals, on the other hand, support the definition of competency-based criteria and help identify candidates with strong leadership potential, teamwork skills, and ethical integrity. This interdisciplinary approach enhances the overall quality and fairness of the recruitment process.

Sustainable improvement in military recruitment also requires the implementation of continuous training programs. The rapid evolution of military technologies and operational strategies makes it essential for soldiers to update their skills regularly. Continuous training enables both recruits and active personnel to adapt to emerging challenges such as cyber warfare, advanced communication systems, and the use of unmanned technologies. For example, training in cybersecurity has become indispensable in modern military contexts where digital threats can significantly affect operational outcomes (Clarke & al, 2019). Regular training in modern weapon systems and surveillance technologies further ensures that soldiers remain operationally effective in technologically advanced environments. Equally

important is the establishment of regular psychological monitoring for both recruits and active-duty soldiers. Military personnel often face traumatic experiences that can negatively affect their mental health and operational performance. Continuous psychological support, including counselling services, resilience training, and post-mission debriefings, helps prevent the development of severe mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) (Adler & al., 2018). By maintaining the psychological well-being of soldiers, the armed forces can enhance both individual performance and collective efficiency in the field.

In conclusion, adapting military recruitment in the DRC to contemporary requirements requires a comprehensive and integrated approach. Strengthening physical and psychological criteria, tailoring recruitment to mission-specific needs, modernizing evaluation methods through technology, and investing in continuous training and psychological support will significantly improve the effectiveness of the FARDC. These reforms will contribute to the development of a professional, resilient, and technologically capable military force, better equipped to address the complex security challenges facing the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study provide a comprehensive understanding of the limitations and potential improvements in the recruitment system of the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC). They highlight a significant mismatch between current recruitment practices and the multidimensional competencies required for modern military operations. The findings confirm that physical evaluation remains dominant, while psychological, cognitive, and technical dimensions receive insufficient attention. At the same time, structural challenges such as logistical constraints, lack of qualified personnel, corruption, and socio-political influences continue to weaken the effectiveness of the recruitment process. These results collectively emphasize the urgent need for a comprehensive, competency-based, and multidimensional recruitment framework.

With regard to the research hypotheses, the findings strongly support the initial assumption that the current recruitment system in the DRC does not adequately meet the requirements of contemporary warfare. The hypothesis that modern military effectiveness depends on the integration of psychophysical, cognitive, and technical competencies is validated by the observed gaps in recruitment practices. The study also confirms that the absence of standardized and scientifically grounded evaluation methods contributes to the selection of underqualified candidates. Furthermore, the hypothesis that systemic issues such as corruption and insufficient infrastructure negatively affect recruitment quality is clearly supported by the evidence. These findings demonstrate that improving recruitment requires both technical reforms and institutional transformation.

In relation to the research objectives, the study successfully achieves its main goal of evaluating existing recruitment criteria and identifying the competencies necessary for an optimal military profile. The analysis clearly defines the essential physical, psychological, and technical attributes required for effective military performance in the DRC context. It also provides a critical assessment of current evaluation methods and highlights their limitations, particularly the overreliance on physical testing and the neglect of cognitive and psychological dimensions. Moreover, the study proposes concrete and actionable recommendations, including the adoption of advanced technologies, the integration of psychometric tools, and the development of continuous training programs. These contributions directly address the research objectives and offer practical solutions to improve recruitment practices. When compared with the findings of other scholars, the results of this study align with existing literature on military recruitment and organizational effectiveness. Previous studies emphasize the importance of psychological resilience, cognitive capacity, and leadership skills in modern military environments (Baaz & al, 2018; Sweeney & al., 2015). Similarly, research on military systems in other countries highlights the increasing role of technology, simulation-based training, and competency-based selection frameworks (Goldman, 2016; Heineken, 2019). The present study confirms these trends while extending them to the specific context of the DRC. It also reinforces the argument that traditional recruitment models are insufficient in addressing the complexities of contemporary conflicts, particularly in regions affected by instability and asymmetric warfare. In this sense, the study contributes to the broader academic debate by contextualizing global military recruitment principles within the realities of the Congolese environment.

The contribution of this research lies in its multidimensional and context-specific approach to military recruitment. Unlike many previous studies that focus on isolated aspects of recruitment, this work integrates physical, psychological, cognitive, technical, and institutional dimensions into a single analytical framework. It provides a structured model for defining an optimal military profile adapted to the specific challenges of the DRC. In addition, the study offers practical recommendations that can inform policy reforms, including the modernization of evaluation methods, the professionalization of recruitment personnel, and the promotion of transparency and merit-based selection. By combining theoretical analysis with practical implications, this research contributes both to academic knowledge and to the improvement of military practices.

Despite its contributions, the study presents certain limitations that must be acknowledged. First, the research relies primarily on qualitative and documentary analysis, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. The absence of large-scale empirical data, such as field surveys or experimental evaluations, restricts the ability to quantitatively measure the impact of proposed reforms.

Second, the study focuses specifically on the DRC context, which may limit the direct applicability of its conclusions to other countries with different institutional and geopolitical conditions. Third, access to reliable and up-to-date data on military recruitment practices in the DRC remains limited, which may affect the depth of certain analyses. These limitations highlight the need for further empirical research to validate and expand the findings.

Finally, the study opens several important perspectives for future research. Subsequent studies could adopt quantitative approaches to measure the effectiveness of competency-based recruitment models in the DRC. Experimental research could also evaluate the impact of technological tools, such as simulation systems and biometric assessments, on candidate selection outcomes. In addition, comparative studies between the DRC and other African or international military systems could provide deeper insights into best practices and adaptation strategies. Future research may also explore the long-term effects of psychological monitoring and continuous training programs on military performance and resilience. By addressing these areas, future studies can further strengthen the scientific and practical understanding of military recruitment in complex environments.

## CONCLUSION

This study examined the limitations and transformation needs of military recruitment within the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) in the context of contemporary security challenges. The analysis demonstrated that current recruitment practices remain largely centered on physical evaluation, while psychological, cognitive, and technical competencies receive insufficient attention. Such an imbalance limits the ability of the armed forces to respond effectively to modern threats, including asymmetric warfare, terrorism, and technologically driven conflicts. The findings highlighted several structural constraints that weaken recruitment quality, including inadequate infrastructure, logistical difficulties in remote areas, a shortage of qualified evaluators, and persistent issues of corruption and favouritism. These factors collectively contribute to the selection of underprepared candidates and undermine both operational performance and institutional credibility. In response, the study emphasized the necessity of adopting a multidimensional and competency-based framework capable of integrating physical, psychological, cognitive, and technological dimensions into the recruitment process.

The proposed reforms focused on strengthening selection criteria, modernizing evaluation methods through the integration of advanced technologies, and promoting collaboration with military psychology and human resource experts. The study also stressed the importance of continuous training programs and regular psychological monitoring to enhance soldiers' resilience, adaptability, and long-term effectiveness in hostile environments.

Overall, this research demonstrates that improving military recruitment in the DRC requires both technical innovation and institutional reform. By implementing a comprehensive and merit-based recruitment system, the Armed Forces of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (FARDC) can build a more professional, resilient, and effective military force capable of ensuring national security and contributing to regional stability.

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