

# **Arming entrepreneurs: Effect of Singapore's National Service on the entrepreneurial ability of young Singaporeans**

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# Arming Entrepreneurs: Effect of Singapore's National Service on the Entrepreneurial Ability of Young Singaporeans

Graeme Jackson

## ABSTRACT

Since 1967, Singapore has enforced conscription, a two-year compulsory military service that all Singaporean males must participate in. This long-standing practice, referred to as National Service (NS), has deep roots in the creation of Singapore's unique identity. National Service has near unanimous support from Singaporeans, who believe NS is crucial to Singapore's survival. The need for NS is connected to Singapore's desirable geographical placement on the junction of major shipping routes which drives economic success. In this aggressive, innovation driven economy, Singapore has continued to provide entrepreneurs with an abundance of opportunities. This report explores the effect of Singapore's National Service on the entrepreneurial activity of young Singaporeans. One would expect that as a result of the two years spent in NS, young Singaporean males are hindered in their ability to transition into such career, losing a time dependent advantage. Despite this challenge posed by the NS, Singapore maintains a strong climate for the development of entrepreneurs. Although it seems unlikely, research indicates NS does not compromise the entrepreneurial ability of Singaporean youth, but in actuality, it enables their ability. The participation in NS provides Singaporeans' training which develops important values and life experience. Additionally, participation provides many support systems to financially aid members of NS. The educational experience of NS maintains integral in Singapore's society, and its prominence continues to provide young Singaporeans skills transferable to the entrepreneurial practice.

## INTRODUCTION

### Singapore's Global Recognition

Singapore has caught the attention of the modern world. Under a global lens, Singapore is best known for its thriving economy, rich diversity, and harsh authority. For many, it is hard to remember the third world country, abundant in greenery, that the now global powerhouse used to be. It was Singapore's involvement in the global economy that made its rapid transition into a first world country possible ("Singapore," n.d.). To the western world, Singapore's harsh laws and punishment may seem alien, but everything plays a crucial role in building Singapore's unique national identity. Unknown by most, Singapore's strict society is the result of their historical wounds and the safety mechanisms installed to prevent a revival to the hard-fought history. Throughout many dynamic cycles of history, Singapore has prevailed in becoming the country it is today. In Singapore, values and history are deeply important to the country, its citizens, and its future.

### Origins of Singapore

The geography of Singapore was the major driver for its recognition. Its location on major shipping routes served as an optimal post for trading activities ("Singapore," n.d.). The first settlements in Singapore date back to the 13th century, however it only gained popularity in the 14th century, when it became known as "Singapura" or "The Lion City" ("Singapore," n.d.).

The 19th century marks the creation of modern Singapore. It was established as a trading post by Sir Thomas Stamford Raffles, a British official, who formed treaties with the area's local emperors ("About Singapore," n.d.). The official establishment in 1819 sparked a wave of immigration from China, India, and Maylaya ("About Singapore," n.d.). The unification of these three cultures did not last which forced the Raffles Town Plan, a plan to segregate ethnic groups, to be enacted in 1822 ("About Singapore," n.d.).

The flourishing of Singapore was halted during World War II when the Japanese invaded Singapore ("About Singapore," n.d.). The British were forced to surrender to Japanese forces in 1942, marking the largest surrender in the history of the British Empire ("About Singapore," n.d.). It wasn't until 1945 that Japan surrendered the island back to the British Military Administration and Singapore became a British Crown Colony ("About Singapore," n.d.). Later in 1959, the rise of Singaporean nationalism forced agreements that afford the region self-governance on a variety of issues ("About Singapore," n.d.). In 1963, the formation of Malaysia but two years later, following many race riots, "Singapore was asked to leave the Malayan federation" because of "intractable ideological differences between Singapore's state government and the Malayan federal government" (Chan, 2013, p.46). This event severely damaged Singapore's economy with the loss of an "economic hinterland in Malaysia" (Chan, 2013, p.46).

The separation left Singapore's small nation exposed to external threats and memories of the Japanese invasion became a source of fear (Chan, 2013, p.46). The fear was apparent in prioritization of issues, making defence Singapore's top priority. In 1967, Singapore established military conscription in which all able-bodied males must participate in National Service (NS) at the age of 18 (Chan, 2013, p.46). National Service became a critical component to the function of Singapore's Economy. Singaporeans understood the need to protect its small country and the price that needed to be paid was conscription.

Later in 1969, Singapore thrust its economy forward building its first container terminal, becoming the first in Southeast Asia to take this leap ("Connecting to the world," n.d.). This move not only pushed Singapore into the global economy, it also set the foundation for it becoming the busiest shipping port in the world. The global destination port shares ties with 600 other ports connecting 120 countries around the world ("Connecting to the world," n.d.). The geographical location of Singapore set the stage for it to become a shipping powerhouse. The country sits on the crossroads of an abundance of significant trade lines ("Connecting to the world," n.d.). Singapore continues to develop its port technology as international demand increases their reach further into the world.

## **About NS**

Currently, Singapore's NS is described as "an essential part of [their] nationhood and a rite of passage for every Singaporean and Permanent Resident (PR) male" ("Discover NS," n.d.). During NS, conscripts serve their time in the Singapore Armed Forces (SAF), Singapore Civil Defence Force (SCDF) or, Singapore Police Force (SPF) ("Discover NS," n.d.). Since 1967, over 900,000 male Singaporeans have served their two-year NS as full-time National Servicemen (NSF) ("Discover NS," n.d.). During NS, the NSFs live together on base and undergo their service obligations. After NS, the service members participate in Operationally Ready National Service (ORNS) ("Citizen Soldier," n.d.). The obligations of ORNS are active until members reach the age of 40 or 50, depending on skill set and ranking ("Citizen Soldier," n.d.). During ORNS, members complete a 10-year training cycle ("Citizen Soldier," n.d.). The training is comprised of three stages: Strengthening Stage, Sharpening Stage, and Sustain Stage ("Citizen Soldier," n.d.). First, the Strengthening Stage develops both individual and team proficiencies in order to maintain operational readiness ("Citizen Soldier," n.d.). Second, the Sharpening Stage develops unit proficiency in warfighting scenarios ("Citizen Soldier," n.d.). Finally, the Sustain Stage emphasizes integrated training and maintains operational readiness ("Citizen Soldier," n.d.).

Throughout the service training of all areas for NSF is emphasized. The following values of the Ministry of Defence are developed into core traits and behaviors: Loyalty to Country, Leadership, Discipline, Professionalism, Fighting Spirit, Ethics, Care for Soldiers, and Safety ("Core Values," n.d.) The development of competencies during NS is a foundational component that shapes Singapore's society and culture.

## Outlook on NS

In 2013, a study of Singaporeans' Attitudes to National Service was conducted by the Institute of Policy Studies (Leong, Yang, Ho, 2013). The study shows the public's perception of NS and the level of trust and support for NS. The study reports finding NS has the strong support of Singaporeans and participation is viewed as "fulfilling a social mission beyond its defence mandate" (Leong et al., 2013, p.2). Additionally, NS is perceived as a driving force for equality because it "embodies equity and universality, and levels the playing field" (Leong et al., 2013, p.5). It seems almost unanimous the opinion towards NS in Singapore, the country shares largely homogenous values, while still retaining its cultural "melting pot". The driving force for these values are the trouble past experience of the country, its geological exposure, and its non-proportional landmass to economy ratio. The first priority remains clear in Singapore; do not relive the past and retain a fortified country.

## RESEARCH QUESTION

The roots of Singapore's history has shaped the national culture that can be seen in Singapore today. The most significant component of the culture is the importance of defense and the process of National Service. With 98% of Singaporeans reporting the belief that NS is necessary for the country, the depth of its societal influence is obvious (Leong et al., 2013). One would expect, as a result of the two years spent in NS, that young Singaporeans males are hindered in their ability to transition into a career; losing an advantage on the global stage. However, upon further research, it is now clear Singapore maintains a strong climate for the development of entrepreneurs. Although it seems unlikely, research indicates NS does not compromise the development of entrepreneurs. In an attempt to understand the correlation between NS and entrepreneurial development, we must first understand what factors drive this entrepreneurial development, how the participation in NS influences these factors, and the implications of the effect NS has on these factors.

## DISCUSSION

### Entrepreneurial Climate of Singapore

The importance of entrepreneurship to a country as a driver for creating jobs and strong economic health is understood by the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM). The GEM collects data and provides insight into entrepreneurial activity, its implications, and its drivers. The 2014 GEM Singapore Report (Chernyshenko, Jiang, Lee, Chan, 2015) analyzes the environment of Singapore and compares it to other innovation-driven economies. As concluded by GEMs report Singapore's entrepreneurial climate maintains successful growth. It reports its main data findings in the form of 4 key drivers: Rate of Entrepreneurship, Intent to Start a Business and Attitudes towards Entrepreneurship, Nature of Start-ups, and Framework Conditions for Entrepreneurship (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). In this report, the influence of National Service will be assessed in the scope of Rate of Entrepreneurship, Developing Effective Leaders, and Framework of Support. Rate of Entrepreneurship looks at the growth of Singapore's entrepreneurial activity, while Developing Effective Leaders and Framework of Support analyzes the conditions needed to foster entrepreneurial growth in Singapore. These topics, considering GEMs research and The Big Five personality dimensions (Zhao, Seibert, 2006) that are important to entrepreneurs, show the main factors that shape the entrepreneurial scene in Singapore and allow it to flourish in the global economy.

### Rate of Entrepreneurship

The Rate of Entrepreneurship provides an analysis of Singapore's amount of total early-stage entrepreneurship (TEA) (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). The TEA rate is an indicator used by GEM to "estimate the number of residents in a country that are currently participating in burgeoning entrepreneurial activities" (Chernyshenko et al., 2015, p.7). Singapore's average TEA rate over the previous 4 years ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> overall on the GEM report (Chernyshenko

et al., 2015, p.30). One critical factor that influences the TEA rate is the confidence of entrepreneurs in the nation's economy (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). GEM describes the steady TEA as the possible effect of the strong economy providing citizens with more confidence. If confidence in the economy effects the TEA rate, we must analyze how National Service effects its participants view on the nation's economy.

In a survey, NS: Before and After, of 138 NS members distributed at Nanyang Technological University campus, respondents showed a strong correlation between NS and increased levels of confidence (See Table 1). The survey consisted of 4 statements that the responded evaluated on a linear scale. The following statements were asked: 1. *Due to my time in NS: I became a more patriotic individual*, 2. *Due to my time in NS: I became more confident in Singapore's future*, 3. *Due to my time in NS: I became confident my countries economy will continue to grow*, 4. *Due to my time in NS: I became a more confident my ability to succeed in Singapore*. The statements were evaluated on a linear scale between "Strongly Agree" and "Strongly Disagree". The results strongly favored the idea that NS improves participant's confidence in Singapore with 74.28% of responses being either "Strongly Agree" or "Agree" across all questions (See Table 2). When compared to the 10.69% of "Strongly Disagree" or "Disagree" responses across all questions, 74.28% is a significantly large proportion (See Table 2). As the results show, the participation in NS provides a higher level of confidence in Singapore; a factor that influences TEA rate (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). Thus, it is probable NS contributes to the high average TEA rate in Singapore. The responded clearly demonstrate increased patriotic view points from their time in Singapore. As something Singapore struggled to develop in the past, patriotism allows the country to maintain its cultural "melting pot" while not forgetting the past events that led them to fortify the country.

These results are consistent to the 2013 Institute of Policy Studies survey of Singaporeans' Attitudes to National Service which found Singaporeans' perceive a better future and survival of Singapore to be the top benefits and impacts of NS (Leong et al., 2013). Therefore, the attitudes to Singapore's NS appear to stay consistent across the five-year gap between the two surveys. The reason for the consistencies can be again contributed to the solid values and mission of Singapore.

### **Developing Effective Leaders**

Effective entrepreneurship relies on the fundamental activity of creating and maintain a business. This process only gains success if the entrepreneur retains high competency levels and emotional intelligence. A study of The Big Five Personality Dimensions and Entrepreneurial Status (Zhao, Seibert, 2006) found entrepreneurs score high on traits "openness to experience (curiosity, innovation) and conscientiousness (self-discipline, motivation) and considerably lower on neuroticism" (Robinson, 2014).

In the beginning of National Service, every recruit begins their transformation into a soldier with Basic Military Training (BMT) ("Our Training," n.d.). The training consists of three main phases: Orientation and Team Building, Learning and Development, and Transformation and Achievement ("Our Training," n.d.). The training requires each recruit to meet the physical, intellectual, and emotional training outcomes. A major outcome of this training is that all recruits learn how to foster strong motivation, become resilient in adversity, utilize adaptive thinking, and retain commitment to tasks ("Our Training," n.d.). These outcomes directly relate to Zhao's (2006) findings in The Big Five Personality Dimensions and Entrepreneurial Status. The ability to foster motivation and commit to tasks builds NS members conscientiousness. Additionally, the ability face adversity and use adaptive thinking lowers neuroticism. The development of these personality straits is all part of the process of becoming a better soldier, which in-turn, affords the learning important life lessons transferable into the entrepreneurial environment.

The NS: Before and After survey tested the NS effects on the personality traits outlined by Zhao (2006). In the survey, the respondents evaluated how their experience in NS effected their Innovative Thinking, Self-Discipline, Motivation, and EQ (Emotional Intelligence in regard to Neuroticism); choosing between "Worsened", "No Change", or "Improved". The "Improved" results for Innovative Thinking, Self-Discipline, Motivation, and EQ was 63.77%, 92.03%, 82.61%, and 78.99% respectively (See Table 3). Furthermore, the "Worsened" results were 7.24%,

1.45%, 3.62%, and 1.45% respectively (See Table 3). The survey displays the high value of NS in improvement of these traits with little response showing negative impact (See Table 4). Moreover, the report of no change in personality traits was also minimal in each category indicating the effectiveness of this training. These responses confirm the expected results of learning or improving personality traits throughout NS training. Additionally, the 2013 IPS survey of Singaporeans' Attitudes to National Service found when asked what National Service means to them, the top reported belief of Singaporeans' was that NS is meant to instill discipline and values amongst the youth of Singapore (Leong et al., 2013). This result shows that the nation does not view NS as strictly a defense mechanism, it also is viewed as an educational tool. In correlation to this view, the 2014 GEM Singapore reports education, particularly at the tertiary level, to be perceived as the 2<sup>nd</sup> largest area responsible for fostering entrepreneurial activity in Singapore (Chernyshenko et al., 2015, p.74). Although NS is not tertiary education, this report is based on the respondents' perception of their countries educational benefits. Thus, it is likely that NS is considered in the decision making, although there is no specific question regarding it. National Service mitigates factors in the Singapore culture that normally would be destructive to the entrepreneurial climate. The learning of Self-Discipline amongst the youth in Singapore is important because the rich society has created a pampering culture for the youth (Harris, 2002). The Los Angeles Times discussed a past survey by Straits Times of 104 teens. The survey found, "when asked how dependent they were on maids, most rated themselves about a 7 out of 10--with 10 being completely dependent" (Harris, 2002). This pampering culture results in a lack of self-discipline which, in the absence of a NS requirement, would prevent young Singaporeans ability to become entrepreneurs. The participation in NS allows Singapore to create a nationwide education system for young men to learn important values and life lessons. The successful mitigation of this effect can be observed by Singapore's 8<sup>th</sup> place entrepreneurship ranking in the recent 2017 U.S. News & World Report (2017).

## FRAMEWORK OF SUPPORT

Singapore's large framework of support for entrepreneurial activities earned the nation first place in the 2014 GEM Singapore Report (2015). The factors of framework that topped the list were Entrepreneurial Financial Support, Government Policies, and Government Entrepreneurship Programs. Furthermore, Singapore earned rankings within the top five for the Education and Training, Research and Development Transfer, and Market Openness factors (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). The reports additional factors include Commercial and Professional Infrastructure, Physical Infrastructure, and Cultural and Social Norms; all of which earned scores that made little contribution to its 1<sup>st</sup> place overall ranking (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). A major factor that needs to be considered, and was absent from the GEM report, is the access to business networks. This factor is a major determinant of entry barriers and ability to raise capital.

The first framework condition, Entrepreneurial Financial Support, is described as "the availability of financial resources-equity and debt-for new and growing firms (including grants and subsidies)" (Chernyshenko et al., 2015, p.53). It is no surprise that Singapore earned top place for this framework condition with the abundance of grants, subsidies, and access to investment. Consecutively, the Singapore Ministry of Defence also supplies an abundance of financial support for NS members. The main source of financial support from the Ministry of Defence is in the form of HOME (HOUsing, Medical, Education) awards, NS Pay, and IPPT (Individual Physical Proficiency Testing) ("Awards and Recognition," n.d.). In addition, the Ministry of Defense provides seed money for defence technology focused start-ups (Hua, 2015) which NS members have an upper hand in obtaining because they understand the defense needs and already are a member of the forces. The HOME awards function as financial relief installments for members reaching millstones of their NS and ORNS. The three installments are each a total of \$5,000-\$5,500, depending on military vocation, providing NS members up to \$16,500 in financial support ("Awards and Recognition," n.d.). NS members also receive NS pay for both their participation in military activities and time spent away from work; NS pay has special considerations for self-employed members (NS Pay, 2018). Additionally, IPPT awards maximum \$500 per year for up to 27 years which allows for NS members to gain \$13,500 total ("Awards and Recognition," n.d.). Although the financial reliefs are not direct forms of entrepreneurial financial support, each instrument allows for mitigation of living expenses which in turn increase financial abilities.

The second framework condition, Government Policy, describes the extent to which the government affords support through policy (Chernyshenko et al., 2015, p.53). A government policy which affords support to NS members is a tax relief benefit (“Awards and Recognition,” n.d.) The tax relief provides NS members the opportunity to claim up to \$5,000 in tax relief per year of NS and ORNS (“Awards and Recognition,” n.d.). This tax relief program is a small contribution, afforded specifically to NS members, in the scope of many other policies that increase the ease of starting a business.

The third framework condition, Government Entrepreneurship Programs, describes the “accessibility and quality of government programs” (Chernyshenko et al., 2015, p.53). The government has many programs that supply seed money for innovative defence focused start-ups such as the Defence Innovation Research Programme (Hua, 2015). These defence focused entrepreneurial programs produce research and development opportunities for skilled service members to capitalize on. This also incorporates the Research and Development Transfer framework condition because it provides funding for research and development (Hua, 2015). In addition, NS members participate in the Ministry of Defence’s PRIDE (PRoductivity and Innovation in Daily Efforts) movement which promotes more efficient alternatives to work processes by “building a culture of productivity, of innovation and organizational excellence” (Ben, 2018). This fosters the growth of research and development as well as encourages an entrepreneurial and innovative mindset.

The Education and Training framework condition describes the learning systems directly related to entrepreneurship (Chernyshenko et al., 2015, p.53). Although the NS does not have a direct correlation to any entrepreneurial education or training institutions, the participation in NS is filled with valuable learning experiences that can be transferred back to the entrepreneurial world and lead to successful entrepreneurial ventures. Mark Zhang and Jeffery Tan, co-founders of Lobang King, verifies the usefulness of NS training in entrepreneurship through personal experience (Tan, 2017). Zhang explains how the “NS turned out to be one of the most important business schools [he] had attended” (Zhang, 2017). Furthermore, “the pair drew upon their experiences in NS to remain motivated and focused, driven by the core values of perseverance, teamwork, and attention to detail” (Tan, 2017). The experience described by these prior NS members are no surprise, as it coincides with the results of both the 2013 IPS report and the 2014 GEM Singapore report.

The Market Openness framework condition is described as “how open the local markets are to new goods and services as well as the level to which new and growing firms can enter markets without being unfairly blocked by established businesses” (Chernyshenko et al., 2015, p.67). The market openness in Singapore has little correlation with any part of NS participation. The only possible correlation is the ability to build a network of connections, enabling ease of market entrance.

Building network connections can happen at any point in one’s life. The 2-year enlistment of NS allows Singaporeans to build strong relationships with their fellow NS members. The strong connections that can be established are a common occurrence in the close quarter living environments during the NS designation. The NS: Before and After survey, with a yes/no response option, asked NS members if they made valuable connections, if they would engage in future business activities with the connections, and if they believe the connections would aid them in starting a business venture (See Table 5). This survey found that 107 of 138 respondents reported building valuable connections. Out of these respondents, 94 would engage in future business activities with the connections and 89 believe that the connections would provide them aid in starting a venture. The aid was described by the survey as, but not limited to, business advice and/or financial support. The high proportion of respondents that reported to have made valuable connections during their time in NS is a great indicator that NS provides a large increase in network connections which could support entrepreneurial activity. Furthermore, the survey found a large portion of respondents who had made valuable connections would engage in future business activities with their connections. This indicates a trust-worthy bond between the individuals, entrepreneurial intention, and alertness to opportunities. The final question of the survey asked if respondents believed that the connections would aid them in starting a business venture which, again, yielded a high positive response. This response further indicates NS provides a larger access to opportunities or investment and a possible safety net for new entrepreneurs. These

opportunities NS provides for establishing long-term meaningful business connections is a major contributor to entrepreneurial activity.

The creation of a network abundant in valuable connection is a benefit of National Service which should create a safety net, however, GEM still reports that a lack of risk taking is the top suspected inhibitor of entrepreneurial activity in Singapore (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). The culture of playing it safe in Singapore could be attributed to the small local market in Singapore where, in the event of venture failure, the pitfall is publicly noticed. NS unfortunately does not seem to override this effect; however, the growing market may eventually become so large this fear may be reduced or the collective benefits in Singapore society will out way the downfalls of the fear.

The final three framework conditions Commercial and Professional Infrastructure, Physical Infrastructure, and Cultural and Social Norms had little effect on Singapore earning the first place in the GEM report for framework conditions (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). Singapore scored low on Commercial and Professional Infrastructure and Physical Infrastructure because of the countries limited size of its geographical region and the high cost of establishing a physical business location (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). This is expected in highly developed cities and there is little that can be done to mitigate this factor without geographic expansion.

The Cultural and Social Norms framework condition ranked 9<sup>th</sup> overall; however, only a small portion of the framework condition was rated at this average level (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). The GEM report still “rated Singapore’s culture as highly supportive of ‘individual success achieved through own personal efforts’, and emphasizing ‘self-sufficiency, autonomy and personal initiative’ and ‘the responsibility that the individual (rather than the collective) has in managing his or her own life’” (Chernyshenko et al., 2015). The findings indicate in culture of Singapore the individual bears the burden of responsibility for their own future and success. This culture or social norm is metaphorically representative of each NS member’s responsibility, in which personal efforts and individual sacrifice must be made by each Singaporean male in order to succeed in completing NS, Singapore’s cultural right of passage. Additionally, the disciplinary focus of NS allows Singaporeans to break the youth pampering cultural narrative seen in many economically successful nations. The process of NS instilling discipline as a value in the youth not only sets Singapore apart, but it establishes the knowledge that of ones’ self-initiative leads to success.

### **Conscription in the World**

The topic of conscription has been a force for controversy ever since being established in 1789, during the French revolution (Bergevin, 2018). The act of conscription has been adopted by many nations around the world, each with its unique purpose. The value based argument for conscription promotes its capability to “reinforces social equality among the people of the nation and works to break down class divisions” (Bergevin, 2018), a benefit Singaporeans believed their National Service affords. The argument also demonstrates the creation of “social consciousness, and uplifts the morals and national pride of the country. It is seen as not only a right, but also a privilege to be able to fight for one’s country” (Bergevin, 2018), again coinciding with Singaporeans NS value proposition. Furthermore, financially beneficial agreements are made in the case of conscription, especially in to scope of access to higher education (Bergevin, 2018). On the contrary, arguments are made against conscription such as “the patriarchic nature of the military leaves little room for the advancement of women” (Bergevin, 2018), its stigmatization of the disabled or sick, it’s able to create demographic shock when men are removed and, of course, the human right argument that conscription removes freedom (Bergevin, 2018).

Each argument in favour of conscription is embraced by Singaporeans almost unanimously, yet on the contrary, the Singapore values do not coincide with the opposing arguments. The service is seen as a force for equality, the conscription cycle is constant and without systematic shock, and the Singaporeans value the opportunity of National Service and its lesson for personal independence.

In 2018, the argument of conscription made its way into the spotlight when France’s President Emmanuel Macron proposed the return of conscription in France (Economist, 2018). In midst of reduced cohesion in European Union,

Macron views the implementation of conscription as a source for national pride, a positive effect shared with National Service in Singapore (Economist, 2018). The plan also aims to tackle unemployment issues amongst the youth in France (Mohdin, 2018). The act would require French citizens, at the age of 16, to complete one month of compulsory duty with an option to pursue a further vocation for three to twelve months (Mohdin, 2018). The support for the proposed plan has a positive response of 60% despite some demonstrations of refusal. The implementation of NS in France is a great indicator that the modern world still accepts conscription as a positive force for youth development. The shared goal of NS in both Singapore and France is to increase social cohesion and transfer important values to the youth.

Israel is another country famous for its defense forces, which include conscription requirement for both men and woman. The Israel Defense Forces recruit eligible men and woman from the age of 18 to carry out their national service requirement (IDF, 2013). The term of service is 3 years of men and two years for women, additionally, each recruit will service in the reserve units up to the age of 51 (IDF, 2013). The Israel Defense Forces are praised for their catering to the need of soldiers from both a cultural and social standpoint (IDF, 2013). The forces provide opportunities across the fields of recreation, educations, and personal support (IDF, 2013). If an Israeli recruit has had “incomplete educational backgrounds” they are afforded “opportunities to upgrade their level of education, and career officers are encouraged to study at the IDF's expense during their service” (IDF, 2013). This education focused conscription strategy ensures all members of Israeli society have receive adequate education. Additionally, “the IDF also provides remedial and supplementary education to civilian populations and contributes to the absorption of newcomers among the population at large” (IDF, 2013). The effect of an education intensive service is described, by Elisabeth Braw (2017) in a Foreign Affairs opinion piece, as the contributing factor to rapid expansion in the high-tech sector. The country saw an increase of 1,500 new start-ups in 2015, comprised of 60% service members (Braw, 2017). The conscripts acquire skills that provide them significant advantage when transferring back to the labour market (Braw, 2017). Ofer Familier, the Director of Business Development of a successful high-tech start-up, attributes his success to his time in the service (Braw, 2017). Familier explains in an interview by Braw that “[t]echnical intelligence units in the IDF are like Harvard” (Braw, 2017). Additionally, in this interview he touches on the learned responsibility of being an 18-year-old making life or death decisions (Braw, 2017).

Across many countries with completely different histories, political systems, cultural and societal norms, and geographical positioning, similarities in the intentions of national service are apparent. The countries who are using conscription appear to be using it as a tool for investment in human capital. They understand that as the population ages, the youth of today become the leaders of tomorrow. Investing in the youth grows the future human capital, which in-turn, creates resilient, disciplined, and autonomous citizens who hold the potential to become great entrepreneurs.

## LIMITATIONS

There are many limitations that put constraints on the data in the findings of this report. First, the Singapore Military has a very limited database of historical statistics published for public access. This is a result of limited transparency and privacy which is slowly being improved; however, the nature of statistics requires ‘lead-time’ to develop meaningful and useable data. As a result, a survey of 138 local students at Nanyang Technological University was conducted. This survey also has limitations due to the inability to verify the authenticity of the respondents, specifically, if they had participated in National Service. The methodology of collecting the survey data was a supervised public on-campus stand for filling out the forms. Each respondent gave verbal verification of their participation but to avoid breaching respondents’ privacy, military identification was not requested. Therefore, the results of the survey must not be considered representative of the values, beliefs or practices of the NS members. The small sample size of 138 people and its homogenous group of strictly university students must be considered as a limitation.

## CONCLUSION

The mandatory participation in Singapore's National Service has many correlating factors pertaining to the entrepreneurial ability of young Singaporean males. Under brief observation, one might conclude that National Servicemen in Singapore are stripped of a valued two-years at the prime of their youth; however, this is far from the truth. The relatively homogenous opinion towards National Service is reflective of Singaporeans' understanding that defence retains continued importance to maintain their future in the global economy. Singapore has a confidence driven economy that relies on the patriotism of its citizen to continue pursuing a collective mission. This is established through National Service and, in-turn, Singapore continues to expand entrepreneurially with increasing TEA rates. National Service provides training that is consistent with the needed personality traits from the Big 5 for becoming a successful entrepreneur. The Basic Military Training allows the development of National Service members across the entrepreneurial traits openness to experience, conscientiousness, and low neuroticism. Conscription in other countries also shows that Singapore is not the only place whose youth benefit from conscription. The participation in National Service exceeds the value of strictly being a rite of passage, it is an educational tool that provides important values, creates opportunities, develops a financial support network, and builds valuable connections. These experiences in National Service enable the entrepreneurial ability our young Singaporean males.

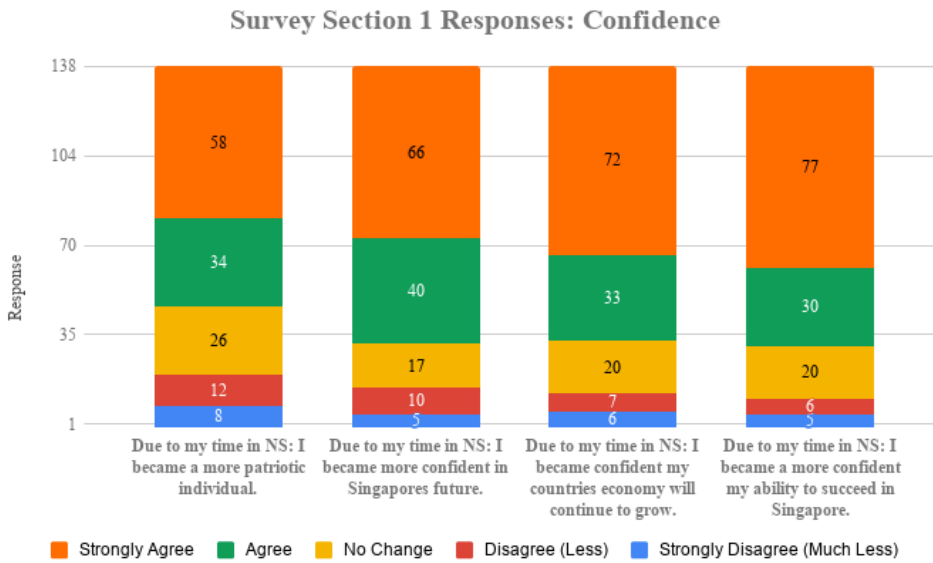
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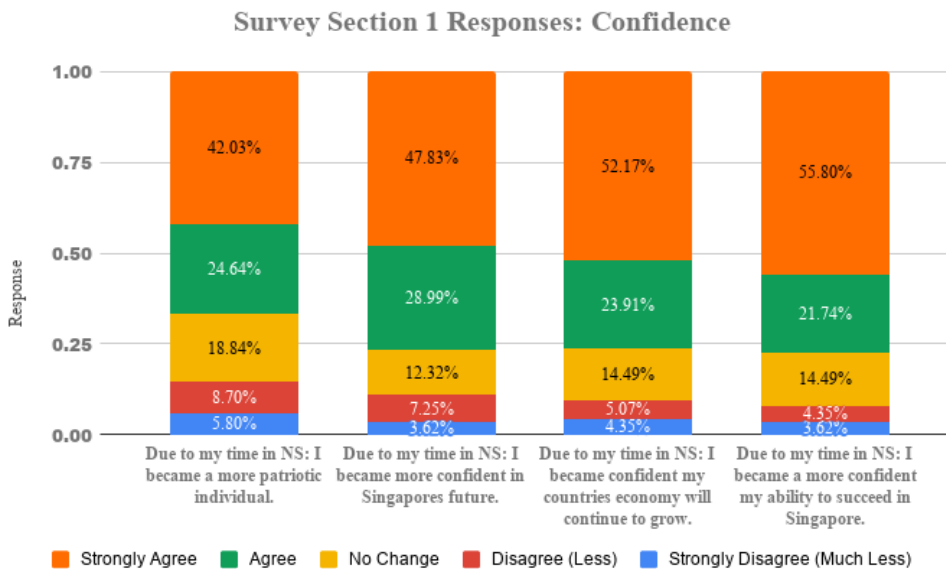
APPENDIX

**Table 1: Survey Section 1 Responses: Confidence (Count)**



Graeme Jackson (NS: Before and After Survey 2018)

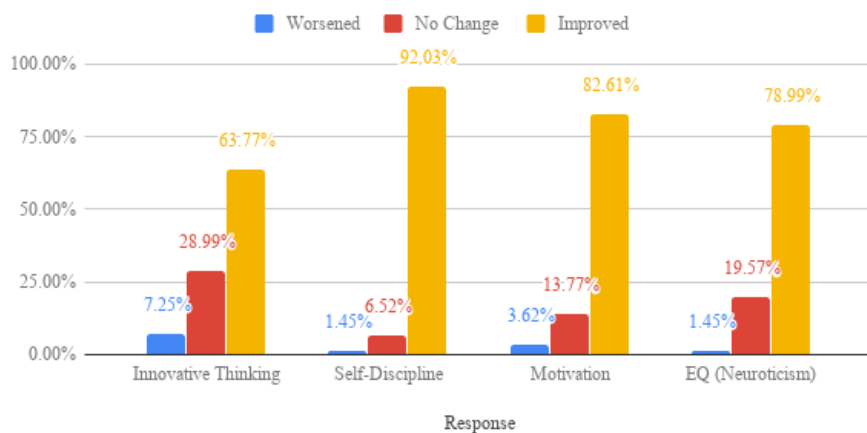
**Table 2: Survey Section 1 Responses: Confidence (Percentage)**



Graeme Jackson (NS: Before and After Survey 2018)

**Table 3: Personality Dimensions (Percentage)**

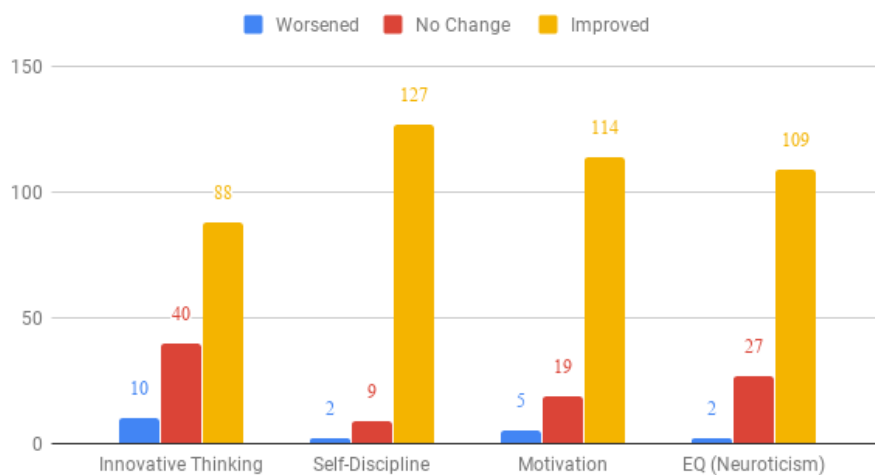
Innovative Thinking, Self-Discipline, Motivation and Low Neuroticism (High EQ)



Graeme Jackson (NS: Before and After Survey 2018)

**Table 4: Personality Dimensions (Count)**

NS Effect on Personality Traits



Graeme Jackson (NS: Before and After Survey 2018)

**Table 5: Valuable Network Connections**

Response	During NS, did you build valuable connections?	If so, would you engage in future business activities with any of the connections?	Do you believe the connections would aid you in starting a business venture?
Yes	107	94	89
No	31	13	18
Total	138	107	107

Graeme Jackson (NS: Before and After Survey 2018)