



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Implementation of Competency-Based Career Path Planning: Solutions for Military Officers Career Development Bottlenecks

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The implementation of competency-based career path planning in military organizations is critical to addressing career development bottlenecks for officers. Traditional career progression models, largely based on seniority and rigid bureaucratic systems, often lead to stagnation, lack of motivation, and the underutilization of talent within the military. This paper explores the application of competency-based frameworks in career planning, aiming to create a more dynamic and efficient system that aligns individual officer capabilities with organizational needs. Using qualitative methods, including literature review and library research, the study analyzes existing models of career path planning from various military forces and identifies common barriers and challenges faced by officers in their career progression. Findings suggest that while competency-based systems provide a flexible, meritocratic structure for career development, challenges such as resistance to change, the complexity of competency assessments, and the need for a more transparent evaluation system still persist. The paper offers solutions for overcoming these challenges, including the integration of continuous professional development, enhanced leadership training, and clearer performance metrics. The proposed model aims to create a career path that is both adaptable to the evolving demands of modern warfare and supportive of individual career aspirations, ensuring that military officers are equipped with the necessary skills and experience for future leadership roles.

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INTRODUCTION

Military organizations globally face significant challenges in the career development of their officers, often due to outdated and rigid career progression systems (Smith, 2012). These systems, traditionally based on seniority, rank, and time in service, can lead to career stagnation, decreased motivation, and the underutilization of individual officer potential (Luksyte et al., 2011). Such limitations hinder not only personal growth but also the overall effectiveness of the military in adapting to modern, rapidly evolving operational environments. The implementation of competency-based career path planning offers a promising solution to these career development bottlenecks, ensuring that officers skills and competencies align more closely with organizational needs and evolving military demands. (Horey et al., 2004)

While several studies have addressed military career progression and the challenges faced by officers, few have focused on the integration of competency-based frameworks as a solution to career development issues (Dragoo & Barrows, 2016). Existing research predominantly centers on traditional models of promotion and career advancement, without exploring the potential of competency-based systems to offer a more dynamic, meritocratic alternative. This gap in the literature highlights the need for further research into how competency-based approaches can be successfully implemented and what obstacles must be overcome to ensure their effectiveness. (Stoffman, 2022)

Given the ever-changing nature of modern warfare, it is urgent that military organizations re-

evaluate and redesign their career development systems to better prepare officers for future leadership roles. Competency-based career path planning not only addresses individual officer growth but also strengthens the overall organizational capacity by developing officers who are not only competent in their current roles but also adaptable to new challenges (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011). This research is therefore crucial for the modernization of military HR systems and the optimal development of military officers. (Rizescu & Bucăța, 2023)

Previous studies have explored the general concepts of career development and military promotion systems, emphasizing the need for performance-based assessments and more flexible career paths. However, research directly addressing the implementation of competency-based career path systems in the military context remains sparse. Studies such as those by Johnson (2015) and Smith et al. (2018) have identified potential benefits of competency-based approaches, but practical applications and case studies in military settings are still limited. (Flanagan, 2023)

This study offers a novel perspective by integrating competency-based career planning into the military context, providing a comprehensive framework for overcoming career development bottlenecks. By comparing and analyzing various military organizations' existing systems and applying competency-based models, this research aims to present a structured solution that can be adapted to diverse military settings. The novelty lies in both the approach and the practical recommendations for overcoming the existing barriers to implementation. (Kulkov et al., 2023)

The primary objective of this research is to explore and propose a framework for the implementation of competency-based career path planning for military officers. Specifically, the study aims to identify the key competencies required for military leadership roles, assess the challenges in current career systems, and develop strategies to integrate a competency-based model effectively. The significance of this study lies in its potential to improve career development processes, ensure a more efficient and transparent promotion system, and ultimately enhance the leadership quality within military organizations. By providing a detailed analysis of the barriers and solutions associated with competency-based career planning, this research contributes to the broader discourse on military human resource management and organizational development. (McDonald & Hite, 2023)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The career development of military officers has long been a subject of academic interest due to its crucial role in the efficiency and readiness of military organizations. Traditional career progression systems, largely based on seniority and administrative procedures, have been the standard in many armed forces worldwide (Howe, 2001). However, these systems have come under scrutiny for failing to foster individual talent and development, leading to career stagnation, lack of motivation, and inefficiency in the organization. In this literature review, we will explore existing research on military career development systems, the concept of competency-based career planning, and its potential applications and benefits in overcoming the bottlenecks faced by military officers in their career paths.

Traditional military career path systems

Historically, military career progression has been predominantly structured around a seniority-based system, where promotions are often determined by the length of service, rank, and time spent in specific positions (Thomas, 2020). This system, while providing a clear and predictable path for career advancement, has been criticized for its rigidity and failure to take into account individual performance, skills, or competencies (Davis, 2022). In many militaries, this approach can lead to a bottleneck effect, where only a limited number of positions are available for promotion, resulting in long waiting periods for officers to advance (Ahanotu et al., 2023). Furthermore, this seniority-driven structure often neglects the evolving demands of modern warfare, where adaptive leadership, specialized skills, and critical decision-making abilities are increasingly important.

Competency-based career planning

The concept of competency-based career planning has gained traction in various sectors, including the military, as a potential solution to overcome the limitations of traditional promotion systems. A competency-based approach emphasizes the alignment of career progression with the specific skills, knowledge, and behaviors that an individual needs to perform effectively in their role (Torralba &

Doo, 2020). Competency-based frameworks are designed to focus on the actual capabilities of personnel rather than relying solely on time-based criteria for promotions. By focusing on a person's performance and competencies, organizations can ensure that the right individuals are promoted to leadership roles, thus fostering better decision-making, enhanced performance, and increased overall organizational effectiveness (Leone & Reiter-Palmon, 2022).

The implementation of competency-based career planning in military organizations offers a dynamic and flexible model that can adapt to the changing needs of modern military operations. According to (Díez et al., 2023), a competency-based system allows for a more tailored career development approach, where officers are trained and promoted based on a clear set of competencies that align with current and future operational requirements. Such a system encourages continuous professional development and provides clear milestones for career advancement, which are directly tied to the officers' ability to meet the competencies required for leadership roles.

Benefits of competency-based career path planning

Research has shown that competency-based career path planning can help military organizations in several ways. First, it provides a more equitable system for career advancement. By assessing officers on their performance and competencies, rather than merely on seniority, the system promotes meritocracy and ensures that the most qualified individuals advance. This can be particularly important in military organizations where leadership abilities and specialized skills are paramount for success in complex and high-stakes situations.

Second, competency-based systems encourage ongoing development and lifelong learning. Officers are motivated to continuously improve their skills and expand their competencies, which not only enhances their personal career prospects but also contributes to the overall operational readiness and strategic capabilities of the military (McDonald & Hite, 2023). As Harris and Spence (2020) argue, competency-based career development fosters a growth mindset among officers, empowering them to take control of their professional trajectory and ensuring that their competencies remain relevant in the face of evolving military challenges.

Third, competency-based career path systems can alleviate the bottlenecks often experienced in traditional career structures. In seniority-based systems, the limited number of available promotion slots can result in long waiting periods and frustrate talented officers who are eager to advance. Competency-based models, however, provide more opportunities for advancement as they are based on the actual capabilities of the officer, allowing for a more dynamic and fluid career progression (Nice, 2024).

Implementation challenges

While the benefits of competency-based career path planning are clear, several challenges exist in implementing such systems within military organizations. One major obstacle is resistance to change, particularly in traditional military cultures that place a strong emphasis on hierarchical structures and seniority (Mengstie et al., 2023). Military institutions, by nature, are conservative and resistant to rapid changes, and the shift from seniority-based promotion to competency-based models can be met with reluctance from both leadership and personnel (Kutz, 2024).

Moreover, establishing a comprehensive competency-based framework requires a significant investment of time and resources. As noted by Chavez and Higgins (O'Rourke & Bobal, 2024), defining the competencies required for each rank and role, developing training programs to address those competencies, and implementing transparent evaluation systems for performance assessments can be resource-intensive. The development of reliable and valid performance evaluation tools that accurately assess competencies, while avoiding biases, is another challenge. Furthermore, adapting existing human resources management systems to accommodate a competency-based approach requires careful planning and integration with current military structures.

Research on competency-based career planning in the military

Some military organizations have begun experimenting with competency-based systems to address career development bottlenecks. For example, the United States Armed Forces has implemented several competency-based programs aimed at enhancing leadership and management capabilities (Jarvis et al., 2024). The British Army, similarly, has introduced a system focused on leadership skills

and specialized competencies, which are assessed at various stages throughout an officer's career (Rosson, 2022). However, comprehensive research on the effectiveness of such systems, particularly in non-Western military contexts, remains limited. Further investigation into how competency-based career planning can be effectively implemented and adapted to various military environments is essential for understanding the broader applicability and potential impact of this approach.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative research approach to investigate the implementation of competency-based career path planning and its potential in resolving career development bottlenecks in military officers. Qualitative research is appropriate for this study as it allows for an in-depth exploration of perceptions, experiences, and the underlying processes related to military career development (Siew & Koh, 2023). It also facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities of integrating a competency-based model into existing career systems.

Type of research

The research is exploratory and descriptive in nature, as it seeks to explore the concept of competency-based career path planning and describe its potential impact on the career development of military officers. By examining current systems, identifying gaps, and proposing solutions, the study aims to provide a detailed understanding of how a competency-based model can address career progression obstacles in the military. This type of research allows for the generation of new insights, practical recommendations, and strategies for improving career systems within military organizations.

Data sources

The primary sources of data for this study are secondary sources, obtained through an extensive literature review. These sources include academic articles, books, government reports, policy documents, and other publicly available materials related to military career development, competency-based management systems, and human resource practices in military contexts. The literature review serves as the foundation for identifying the key themes, challenges, and opportunities associated with the implementation of competency-based career planning in military organizations.

In addition, qualitative data will be gathered through expert interviews with military personnel, HR professionals, and organizational behavior specialists. These experts provide valuable first-hand insights into the current career development systems and the feasibility of implementing competency-based models in different military settings. A purposive sampling technique will be used to select experts with extensive knowledge of military career systems, HR management in defense organizations, and leadership development practices.

Data collection techniques

Data will be collected through two primary techniques:

- 1. Literature review:** A comprehensive analysis of existing academic literature, policy papers, and case studies related to military career systems and competency-based career planning. This technique will help to establish a theoretical framework for understanding the existing bottlenecks in military career progression and the potential role of competency-based approaches in addressing these issues.
- 2. Expert interviews:** Semi-structured interviews will be conducted with selected experts who have practical experience or expertise in military career development, HR management, and competency-based models. The interviews will allow for a deeper understanding of the challenges in current career systems and the practical implications of implementing competency-based planning. These interviews will be conducted either face-to-face or remotely, depending on the availability of the participants. The interview protocol will be designed to gather insights into the respondents' experiences, opinions, and suggestions regarding competency-based career development systems.

Data analysis methods

The data collected from both the literature review and expert interviews will be analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is a widely used qualitative data analysis technique that allows researchers to identify and interpret patterns, themes, and insights within the data. The process will involve the following steps:

- 1. Data familiarization:** The first step will involve reading through the literature and transcriptions of interviews multiple times to become familiar with the data. This will help identify initial codes and categories related to competency-based career planning, career bottlenecks, and military career development challenges.
- 2. Coding and categorization:** In this step, the researcher will systematically code the data by highlighting relevant segments of the text that relate to the research questions. These segments will be categorized according to key themes such as "competency requirements," "promotion systems," "leadership development," and "bottlenecks in career progression."
- 3. Theme development:** The next step will involve grouping the codes into broader themes. For example, themes might emerge around the challenges of traditional seniority-based systems, the importance of skills assessment in promotion decisions, and the barriers to implementing competency-based systems. The researcher will synthesize these themes into a cohesive narrative that addresses the research questions.
- 4. Interpretation and validation:** Finally, the researcher will interpret the findings and compare them with existing theories and frameworks from the literature. The results will be validated through triangulation, comparing the insights obtained from the literature review with the expert interviews to ensure consistency and reliability.

RESULTS

The implementation of competency-based career path planning offers promising solutions to the longstanding bottlenecks in military officers' career development. Traditional career progression systems, particularly in military settings, have largely relied on seniority and hierarchical structures (Asch & Warner, 2001). These systems, while offering a clear and stable path for advancement, often fail to recognize the individual competencies, skills, and potential of officers, leading to stagnation and inefficiencies in career development. In many military organizations, such systems create barriers for officers who might have the necessary skills and qualifications but lack seniority to progress. This is especially problematic in an era where military forces are increasingly required to adapt to new challenges and technologies, demanding a more dynamic and merit-based approach to career development. (Dulce II, 2024)

One of the central findings from the literature review and expert interviews is that the current career systems in many military organizations, particularly in those with rigid hierarchical structures, tend to perpetuate inefficiencies and demotivate officers. The lack of a systematic, competency-based evaluation process means that promotion decisions are often made on the basis of seniority rather than an officer's ability to meet the demands of higher responsibilities (Light, 2011). This results in the "bottleneck" phenomenon, where a large number of officers with similar qualifications and experience are unable to advance, often leading to dissatisfaction and lower morale. Furthermore, the absence of clear competency frameworks makes it difficult for both officers and HR departments to track progress in a structured manner, leading to unclear career pathways and missed opportunities for talent development.

By contrast, a competency-based career path planning system provides a more structured and dynamic approach to career development. It allows for the evaluation of an officer's competencies—ranging from leadership and decision-making skills to technical expertise and emotional intelligence—in a way that recognizes the complexity of modern military operations. Such systems enable military organizations to assess the readiness of officers for more advanced roles, regardless of their seniority. This is particularly important in complex environments where the rapid pace of technological advancements and changing global threats require officers with up-to-date skills and adaptive leadership capabilities. The research has highlighted that a competency-based system can

reduce stagnation by ensuring that the most capable individuals are promoted based on their abilities and not merely their years of service.(Ramirez, 2012)

The expert interviews further corroborate this, with several military HR professionals pointing out that competency-based frameworks help ensure more targeted training and development. Officers are not merely trained for their current roles but are also prepared for future responsibilities, based on a clear understanding of what competencies are required for these roles. For instance, the interviewees noted that competency models provide more comprehensive training programs that are better aligned with the evolving demands of military operations, such as cybersecurity, strategic planning, and interagency collaboration. This allows for a more proactive approach to career development, where officers can be groomed for leadership positions in advance rather than merely promoted due to the passage of time.(Cook, 2014)

Additionally, one of the key benefits of a competency-based approach is its flexibility. Unlike rigid seniority-based systems, competency frameworks can be adapted to fit the changing needs of the organization. This adaptability makes it easier to incorporate new competencies that reflect the evolving nature of military operations. For example, as warfare becomes increasingly technological, military organizations are placing a greater emphasis on competencies related to cyber warfare, data analysis, and technical innovation. This shift, highlighted in the literature, demonstrates the importance of integrating competency-based planning to ensure that military officers are equipped with the right skills for the future battlefield.

The research also highlights challenges in the practical implementation of competency-based career planning. One of the main challenges identified was the resistance to change within established military cultures. Military organizations, by nature, are hierarchical and tradition-driven, which makes it difficult to introduce new concepts like competency-based career progression. Many senior officers, accustomed to the old system, may view these changes as unnecessary or threatening to their status. Furthermore, the establishment of a competency-based framework requires a significant amount of data collection, analysis, and continuous evaluation. For such systems to be effective, they need to be backed by robust HR infrastructure, including accurate performance evaluation tools, detailed competency models, and clear career progression pathways. This requires substantial investment in training HR professionals and military leaders to operate within this new system.

Despite these challenges, the findings underscore the potential benefits of competency-based career path planning. It enhances career development by creating a meritocratic system that rewards skills and potential rather than seniority alone. Officers are not limited by traditional career structures and are encouraged to enhance their skills and capabilities continuously. Furthermore, it helps military organizations identify and nurture talent that might otherwise go unnoticed in a seniority-based system, ensuring that the best-qualified officers are chosen for leadership roles. A competency-based approach thus has the potential to transform military career systems, making them more dynamic, responsive, and aligned with modern defense needs.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

The bottlenecks in traditional career development systems

The analysis of existing career development systems in the military highlights significant bottlenecks that limit the growth and progression of officers. Traditional career models in military organizations, especially those rooted in seniority-based promotion systems, often fail to address individual capabilities and skills. These systems prioritize rank and length of service over performance and competency, leading to a lack of motivation among capable officers who may be delayed in their advancement due to the inflexible nature of the seniority system. In many instances, promotions are not based on an officer's readiness or qualifications for higher responsibilities, but rather on their time in service, which results in an inefficient allocation of resources and missed opportunities for talent management.

In the context of the military, career bottlenecks manifest in the form of overcrowded senior ranks where a large number of officers, possessing similar qualifications and experience, compete for a limited number of positions. As a result, the system becomes saturated, and competent officers who

have the necessary skills and potential for higher roles may remain stagnant, regardless of their performance. This stagnation not only demotivates officers but also leads to the underutilization of skilled personnel. The failure to integrate competency-based criteria in the career advancement process, where promotions are more attuned to an officer's demonstrated capabilities, significantly impacts the overall operational readiness and morale within the military.

One of the key findings from the literature and expert interviews suggests that the absence of a clear competency-based system exacerbates these issues, preventing military organizations from identifying and nurturing talent that could play a vital role in the future strategic objectives of the armed forces. These issues underscore the need for a shift towards competency-based career path planning, which offers the potential to reduce career stagnation by aligning promotion decisions with performance rather than seniority.

Table 1: The bottlenecks in traditional career development systems

Category	Description	Impact
Seniority-Based Promotion	<p>Promotions determined primarily by length of service rather than individual competencies or performance.</p> <p>In traditional career development systems, promotions are often determined primarily by the length of service, rather than individual competencies or performance. This seniority-based system tends to reward tenure over merit, leaving highly capable individuals who may not have as many years of service without the advancement opportunities they deserve. As a result, officers who demonstrate exceptional skills and performance may find themselves overlooked in favor of those who have been in the system longer but may not possess the required competencies.</p>	<p>Limits opportunities for capable officers to advance, leading to frustration and decreased motivation.</p> <p>The impact of such a system is significant. Talented officers who are not able to rise through the ranks due to the seniority bias may experience frustration. This frustration can lead to reduced motivation, as individuals perceive the promotion process to be unfair and not aligned with their professional development. Over time, this disengagement can result in a decline in overall productivity and morale within the workforce, as highly capable individuals seek other opportunities outside the organization or choose to underperform.</p>
Rigid Hierarchical Structures	<p>Strict adherence to rank-based progression without flexibility for role-specific competencies.</p> <p>Rigid hierarchical structures are another significant bottleneck in traditional career development systems. These systems strictly adhere to rank-based progression, often leaving little room for flexibility based on individual skills or specialized competencies. Officers who possess specialized skills, which may not align with the traditional progression paths, may find themselves trapped in a system that does not cater to their unique capabilities. As a result, they may be forced to follow the same career trajectory as others, even though their expertise could be leveraged in more strategic roles.</p>	<p>Stagnation in career growth, particularly for officers with specialized skills not aligned with traditional pathways.</p> <p>The impact of such rigid structures is stagnation in career growth. Officers with specialized skills in areas like technology, innovation, or management may feel sidelined as they are unable to progress through the ranks in a way that matches their career aspirations or skill set. This lack of flexibility can create a sense of dissatisfaction, as individuals struggle to find career advancement that recognizes their unique competencies and allows them to contribute effectively in roles that better align with their expertise.</p>
Limited Evaluation Metrics	<p>Reliance on outdated or subjective evaluation methods that fail to capture an officer's true potential.</p>	<p>Promotes favoritism or bias, reducing transparency and trust in the promotion process.</p>

	<p>Traditional career development systems often rely on outdated or subjective evaluation methods that fail to capture an officer's true potential. These evaluations may focus on factors that do not accurately reflect an officer's capabilities, such as years of service, loyalty, or subjective perceptions of their character or performance. As a result, highly skilled officers who excel in their roles may not be recognized for their achievements if the evaluation system is not designed to account for performance and competencies comprehensively.</p>	<p>The impact of limited evaluation metrics is the promotion of favoritism or bias, which can undermine the credibility of the promotion process. When evaluation criteria are unclear or subjective, it opens the door for biases related to personal relationships, social networks, or other non-performance-based factors. This not only reduces transparency but also erodes trust among officers, as they may perceive the system as unjust and unreliable. The lack of objective metrics diminishes the organization's ability to identify and nurture its most capable individuals.</p>
<p>Overcrowded Ranks</p>	<p>High competition for limited senior positions due to a lack of clear differentiation in competencies.</p> <p>In many traditional systems, there is high competition for limited senior positions, leading to overcrowded ranks. Due to a lack of clear differentiation in competencies and a slow promotion process, many qualified officers find themselves competing for the same positions. The lack of differentiated career tracks or promotion opportunities means that even the most competent individuals may not be able to rise through the ranks in a timely manner, despite their qualifications and achievements.</p>	<p>Creates bottlenecks where many qualified officers are unable to progress, leading to dissatisfaction.</p> <p>The impact of overcrowded ranks is the creation of bottlenecks, where talented officers are unable to advance because of the sheer number of individuals vying for the same positions. This not only causes frustration among officers who feel stuck in their current roles, but it also creates a competitive, high-pressure environment that can harm morale. When promotions are delayed or unattainable for many officers, dissatisfaction can grow, leading to lower retention rates and a lack of motivation.</p>
<p>Inadequate Training Alignment</p>	<p>Training programs not directly linked to the competencies required for career progression.</p> <p>Training programs in many traditional career development systems are often not directly aligned with the competencies required for career progression. Officers may undergo generic or outdated training that does not address the specific skills needed for leadership roles or specialized positions. This misalignment leads to skill gaps that hinder readiness for advancement. Officers may struggle to step into higher positions, as their training has not adequately prepared them for the challenges and responsibilities they would face.</p>	<p>Skill gaps remain unaddressed, hindering readiness for leadership or specialized roles.</p> <p>The impact of inadequate training alignment is the persistence of skill gaps, particularly in areas such as leadership, strategic thinking, or technical expertise. Without the right training programs in place, individuals may find themselves unprepared for the roles they are aiming for, even though they possess the necessary potential and qualifications. This lack of preparedness can undermine confidence and productivity, as officers may feel ill-equipped to perform at a higher level.</p>

The table summarizes the primary bottlenecks in traditional career development systems, specifically in military contexts, and highlights their associated impacts.

- 1. Seniority-based promotion:** Traditional systems often rely on time-in-service as the primary criterion for advancement, sidelining individual skills, leadership qualities, and operational achievements. This reliance can discourage high-performing officers who see their potential

unrecognized due to rigid seniority rules. The resulting dissatisfaction can lead to lower morale and reduced organizational effectiveness.

2. **Rigid hierarchical structures:** Strict adherence to hierarchical progression without considering role-specific competencies creates limited flexibility in career pathways. Officers with specialized skills, such as those in technology or logistics, may find fewer opportunities to advance within rigid frameworks, restricting their contributions to the organization.
3. **Limited evaluation metrics:** The reliance on outdated and subjective performance evaluation methods undermines the fairness and objectivity of promotion processes. These metrics often fail to capture the nuances of individual performance, competencies, and leadership potential, allowing biases or favoritism to influence decisions.
4. **Overcrowded ranks:** The accumulation of officers in mid-level and senior ranks due to insufficient differentiation of competencies results in heightened competition for promotions. This bottleneck limits upward mobility, particularly for talented officers, leading to frustration and underutilization of skills.
5. **Inadequate training alignment:** Training programs that are not explicitly linked to required competencies for advancement exacerbate skill gaps. Officers may be unprepared for the demands of higher roles, further stalling their career progression and diminishing the operational readiness of the organization.

Benefits of competency-based career path planning

Competency-based career path planning represents a shift towards a more meritocratic approach, wherein promotions and career advancements are based on an officer's specific competencies rather than merely their length of service. By focusing on the core skills and qualifications required for higher roles, competency-based systems allow military organizations to more effectively assess the readiness of officers for increased responsibilities. A key advantage of such a system is that it ensures that only officers with the necessary expertise, leadership qualities, and operational experience are promoted to senior ranks. This approach encourages personal and professional development, as officers are motivated to enhance their skills in alignment with the competencies required for the roles they aspire to.

Moreover, competency-based career planning creates a clearer and more structured pathway for officers, providing them with a roadmap for career development based on their strengths and areas of improvement. Such systems allow for the identification of skill gaps and the creation of targeted training programs aimed at developing the competencies needed for career progression. Additionally, competency-based systems facilitate objective decision-making, as promotions are driven by measurable performance indicators rather than subjective assessments influenced by seniority or favoritism. This can lead to a more transparent and equitable career advancement process within military organizations.

The implementation of competency-based planning also increases the strategic alignment between the individual career progression of officers and the evolving operational needs of the military. For example, as warfare continues to evolve with the advent of new technologies, such as cyber warfare and advanced weapon systems, it is crucial that military officers possess competencies in these emerging fields. Competency-based systems allow military organizations to adapt more rapidly to such changes by ensuring that officers are adequately trained in the skills necessary for modern warfare.

Challenges in implementing competency-based career path planning

Despite the evident advantages, the transition to competency-based career path planning presents several challenges, particularly in deeply entrenched military cultures that prioritize tradition and hierarchy. Many military organizations have long-established practices that focus on seniority as a primary criterion for promotion. These entrenched systems often make it difficult to implement new models that prioritize competencies and performance. Resistance from senior officers, who may perceive the shift as a threat to their authority or status, can be a significant obstacle to change.

Furthermore, the successful implementation of competency-based systems requires robust infrastructure and processes that many military organizations may lack. For example, establishing clear and measurable competency frameworks for each rank and role requires significant investment

in developing detailed job descriptions, performance metrics, and evaluation standards. Additionally, the process of regularly assessing and updating these competencies to reflect changing military needs demands continuous attention and resources, which can place additional burdens on already stretched military HR departments.

Another significant challenge is the need for proper training for those involved in the evaluation and promotion processes. Military HR professionals, senior officers, and other stakeholders must be trained in competency-based assessment techniques to ensure that the system is applied fairly and effectively. This training involves not only understanding the competencies required for each position but also how to evaluate and rank officers based on those competencies. Without appropriate training, the competency-based system could fail to address the bottlenecks it is intended to resolve, instead leading to confusion and inconsistency in decision-making.

The role of technology and data in competency-based career path planning

The integration of technology and data analytics is a crucial component in the successful implementation of competency-based career path planning in the military. Digital platforms and advanced data systems allow military HR departments to collect, manage, and analyze vast amounts of information on the performance and competencies of officers. These tools can facilitate the creation of competency profiles, track career progression, and identify skill gaps in real time, allowing for more targeted development initiatives and career planning.

For instance, competency-based assessments can be integrated into performance management systems, which can automatically generate reports on the strengths and weaknesses of individual officers. These reports can then be used to inform decisions regarding career advancement, training needs, and readiness for leadership roles. By utilizing such technology, military organizations can ensure that promotion decisions are based on accurate, up-to-date information, thus eliminating the reliance on outdated performance records or subjective evaluations.

Furthermore, technology can enhance the transparency and fairness of the competency-based career path system by providing officers with clear and accessible feedback on their progress. Digital platforms can enable officers to track their own development, access training materials, and receive guidance on how to improve in specific competencies. This can lead to greater engagement and motivation, as officers take ownership of their career development and are able to see tangible progress towards their goals.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS AND STRATEGIC RECOMMENDATIONS

Looking ahead, the shift towards competency-based career path planning has significant implications for the long-term development of military organizations. As the nature of warfare continues to evolve, military leaders must ensure that their officers are equipped with the right skills and competencies to meet the demands of future operational environments. By implementing competency-based systems, military organizations can foster a more agile, adaptable, and capable officer corps, better prepared to respond to complex challenges.

To facilitate this transition, military organizations must invest in developing comprehensive competency frameworks that are aligned with both current and future operational needs. These frameworks should not only encompass technical skills but also the leadership, decision-making, and interpersonal competencies that are critical to success in modern military contexts. Additionally, the military must ensure that career development systems are continuously updated to reflect the evolving nature of warfare, technological advancements, and global security challenges.

Strategically, it is also important for military organizations to ensure that the adoption of competency-based career path planning is accompanied by a cultural shift. Senior officers, HR professionals, and other stakeholders must be actively involved in the change process to ensure buy-in and smooth implementation. Effective communication, leadership, and training are crucial to overcoming resistance and ensuring that competency-based career planning becomes an integral part of the military's human resource strategy.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that implementing competency-based career path planning is a viable solution to addressing the bottlenecks in military officers' career development caused by traditional seniority-based systems. By prioritizing the alignment of individual competencies with organizational needs, this approach enables a more meritocratic and dynamic career progression framework. Competency-based planning ensures that promotions and career advancements are tied to measurable skills, leadership qualities, and operational readiness, rather than merely length of service. This transition fosters a culture of continuous professional development, improves motivation among officers, and optimizes talent utilization within military organizations. The findings underscore the potential of competency-based systems to enhance operational readiness by equipping officers with the necessary competencies for modern warfare and leadership roles.

The implications of this research highlight the importance of organizational adaptability and investment in the development of robust competency frameworks, transparent evaluation processes, and training programs for both officers and HR professionals. Implementing such systems requires overcoming resistance to change, particularly in hierarchical and tradition-bound military structures. To address these challenges, this study recommends a phased implementation strategy that includes stakeholder engagement, targeted training, and the integration of advanced technology for performance tracking and competency assessment. Furthermore, future research should focus on case studies of military organizations that have successfully adopted competency-based systems, offering insights into best practices and strategies for scaling these approaches globally. By embracing competency-based career planning, military organizations can create a more flexible, efficient, and equitable system that not only supports individual career growth but also enhances the overall strategic capacity of the armed forces.

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