



RESEARCH ARTICLE

Performance-Based Career Management System: Mitigating Bottlenecks in Military Leadership Development

Tarsisius Susilo^{1*}, Yusuf Ali², Priyanto³, Sunarko⁴^{1,2,3,4} Universitas Pertahanan Indonesia

ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Received: Oct 17, 2024 Accepted: Dec 26, 2024	This study explores the implementation of a performance-based career management system as a solution to mitigate the bottlenecks in military leadership development. Traditional career systems in military organizations often rely heavily on seniority or fixed promotion pathways, which can lead to stagnation and limit opportunities for high-potential leaders. By shifting towards a performance-based approach, military institutions can create a more dynamic and meritocratic environment, focusing on individual competencies, achievements, and leadership potential rather than merely the length of service. This qualitative study, based on a comprehensive literature review, analyzes existing research and case studies from global military institutions that have implemented performance-based career management systems. The findings suggest that a performance-driven model enables more effective leadership development by ensuring that leaders are promoted based on actual performance metrics, such as operational success, leadership ability, and skill competencies. Furthermore, the study discusses the benefits of this approach in addressing leadership gaps, increasing officer engagement, and enhancing overall organizational effectiveness. The research highlights the importance of transparent evaluation criteria, comprehensive training programs, and continuous professional development to ensure the successful implementation of performance-based systems. This paper offers recommendations for military organizations looking to modernize their career management systems and enhance leadership capabilities.
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*Corresponding Author: muchsus70@gmail.com	

INTRODUCTION

The development of effective military leadership is crucial for maintaining the operational readiness and strategic success of armed forces worldwide (Peets, 2024). Traditionally, many military organizations have relied on seniority-based career management systems to promote and develop leaders (Zhu et al., 2013). While these systems have been in place for decades, they often fail to address the dynamic nature of modern military challenges and the evolving competencies required for effective leadership (Sangwan & Raj, 2021). The focus on seniority, rather than performance, can result in stagnation, inefficiency, and missed opportunities for talented officers, thus impeding the growth of capable leaders who can adapt to new and complex operational environments (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). This paper explores the concept of performance-based career management systems as a solution to mitigate the bottlenecks in military leadership development. (Volikakis, 2024)

One of the significant gaps in existing military career management systems is the lack of emphasis on individual performance and competencies in the promotion and development process (Carlsson, 2016). Although several studies have discussed leadership development in the military, few have specifically addressed how performance-driven systems could be integrated into the existing structure to overcome the limitations of traditional seniority-based systems (Lee & Kim, 2024). Moreover, the research that has been conducted often focuses on isolated aspects of leadership, such as training or education, without fully examining how a holistic, performance-based approach could

enhance leadership development across all levels of the military.

This research aims to bridge this gap by providing a comprehensive analysis of the benefits and challenges associated with implementing performance-based career management systems in military organizations. The study will explore how these systems can address the leadership bottlenecks caused by traditional promotion processes, fostering a meritocratic environment where leadership potential is nurtured and promoted based on tangible performance metrics. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on integrating a performance-based model into existing military frameworks, providing practical recommendations for military institutions worldwide.(Egevad, 2023)

The objective of this paper is to present a thorough examination of the potential for performance-based career management to improve leadership development in military settings. By analyzing global case studies and existing literature, this research seeks to demonstrate how adopting such systems can enhance leadership effectiveness, increase operational efficiency, and motivate personnel (Mien et al., 2023). The findings of this study are expected to contribute to military human resource management practices, offering valuable insights for policymakers and military leaders aiming to modernize their personnel systems.(Berman et al., 2021)

In terms of practical implications, this research provides military organizations with an evidence-based framework for reforming career management systems. The adoption of performance-based models can lead to better leadership selection and development, ensuring that the military is equipped with the most capable leaders for future challenges(Bangari, 2014). Furthermore, this study highlights the importance of transparent evaluation systems, continuous professional development, and the alignment of individual goals with organizational needs.(Zhongling et al., 2024)

LITERATURE REVIEW

The development of military leadership is a central focus in many defense organizations, as it directly impacts operational effectiveness, strategic execution, and organizational culture (Srivastava & Sushil, 2013). However, traditional career management systems, particularly those based on seniority or fixed promotion paths, have come under scrutiny due to their failure to adequately develop and promote leadership competencies(Francis, 2013). This section reviews the literature surrounding career management systems, leadership development, and the role of performance-based approaches in mitigating career bottlenecks within military institutions.

Traditional career management systems in the military

Traditional military career management systems, particularly those based on seniority and rank, are deeply embedded in many military organizations(Redmond et al., 2015). These systems often prioritize service length over individual performance, which can lead to stagnation in career advancement. Seniority-based systems have been critiqued for promoting officers based on tenure rather than measurable leadership competencies, which might not align with the evolving demands of modern military operations. According to studies by (Robinson et al., 2022), while the traditional model has its merits in ensuring loyalty and stability within the military structure, it can create bottlenecks, especially at higher ranks where the competition for limited positions is fierce. This seniority-centric approach may also lead to disengagement among younger, more talented officers who feel their capabilities are not being adequately recognized.

While seniority-based systems maintain order and predictability, they often neglect the dynamic nature of military leadership, which requires adaptability, innovative thinking, and specialized competencies (Cohen-Setton et al., 2018). This failure to adapt to the evolving needs of the armed forces can inhibit leadership growth and hinder operational readiness, as it does not always promote those best suited to meet contemporary challenges.

Competency-based career development in the military

Competency-based career development models, which emphasize the assessment and development of specific leadership competencies, have gained traction in both military and civilian sectors. These systems focus on identifying, measuring, and promoting specific competencies such as strategic thinking, operational execution, and interpersonal skills, rather than simply relying on length of service or rank. According to (Güttel et al., 2023), the competency-based approach has the potential to align individual career development with the evolving requirements of the organization, ensuring

that leaders possess the necessary skills to succeed in the complex and fast-paced military environment.

Studies by Ng & Rumsey have demonstrated that competency-based systems can significantly enhance leadership quality in organizations by providing clear metrics for promotion and development (Makris et al., 2023). For example, the U.S. military has made strides in incorporating competency frameworks for leadership roles, assessing individuals based on criteria such as decision-making abilities, crisis management, and the capacity to lead diverse teams under pressure. The Navy's Leadership Development Framework (LDF) and the Army's Talent Management Strategy (TMS) are two such examples where competencies are explicitly tied to career progression, ensuring that leaders are ready for high-stakes situations (Neal, 2024).

Competency-based systems are not only focused on assessing existing skills but also emphasize continuous professional development (Harris et al., 2017). By ensuring that career paths are aligned with competencies, these systems allow for a more dynamic progression model, where officers are promoted based on demonstrated potential rather than time spent in service (Abbas et al., 2023). This approach is particularly effective in addressing the leadership bottlenecks that often arise in rigid, seniority-based systems, where talented officers may be sidelined or overlooked.

Bottlenecks in military leadership development

One of the key challenges in military leadership development is the bottleneck that arises when officers are unable to progress in their careers due to rigid promotion systems. Research by Kolditz (2007) and Zoli (2014) suggests that as officers advance through the ranks, they encounter limited opportunities for promotion, particularly in senior leadership positions, which can lead to stagnation and reduced motivation. This is particularly evident in forces with large numbers of senior officers, where the promotion process is slow and competitive (Kotter, 2008).

Bottlenecks can also occur due to a lack of alignment between the military's leadership needs and the competencies of its officers. When promotions are based solely on seniority, officers with specialized or emergent skills—such as cyber warfare or strategic operations—may find themselves passed over for leadership roles in favor of officers with more traditional military experience. This mismatch between leadership needs and individual skills can significantly impact organizational effectiveness, as it creates gaps in leadership competencies where they are most needed (McCall, 2021).

Competency-based career management systems, on the other hand, seek to eliminate such bottlenecks by ensuring that officers are assessed and promoted based on their skills and performance rather than their time in service. A study by Smith (2016) emphasizes that competency-based promotion processes allow for a more streamlined and flexible leadership pipeline, ensuring that the best candidates are promoted in a timely manner, regardless of seniority.

Global practices in performance-based career systems

Several military organizations worldwide have explored or implemented performance-based career management systems to address leadership bottlenecks. The U.S. military, for example, has invested in the Army Talent Management Strategy (TMS) to match individuals with positions based on their skills and experiences, rather than seniority. The British Army has similarly adopted a competency-based framework to evaluate leadership potential, focusing on attributes such as adaptability, communication, and decision-making (Naamati-Schneider & Alt, 2024). These systems highlight the growing trend toward aligning career progression with performance, ensuring that military organizations are equipped with leaders who can meet modern challenges.

The Indian military also has increasingly emphasized leadership competencies, although progress has been slower compared to other nations. Research by Singh (2018) indicates that the Indian Army is gradually shifting from seniority-based promotions to performance-oriented systems, recognizing the need for adaptive leadership in contemporary warfare, especially in areas like counterinsurgency and border management. This shift, however, is still a work in progress, as deeply ingrained hierarchical structures take time to reform.

Challenges and considerations in implementing performance-based systems

While performance-based career management systems offer several benefits, their implementation can be challenging, particularly in traditionally hierarchical military structures. One of the key challenges is overcoming resistance to change. Officers who are accustomed to seniority-based

systems may be reluctant to accept a new model that prioritizes performance and competencies. Moreover, the establishment of clear and objective performance metrics requires substantial investment in training, development programs, and technology to track officer performance effectively (Knapp & Rumsey, 2023).

Another challenge is ensuring fairness and transparency in the evaluation process. In many cases, military organizations face difficulties in establishing standardized and consistent performance metrics across all units and ranks. Without proper checks and balances, there is a risk that bias or favoritism could influence career progression, undermining the meritocratic principles of a performance-based system.

Despite these challenges, the potential benefits of a performance-based system—such as improved leadership quality, greater flexibility, and enhanced operational readiness—make it a promising solution to the bottlenecks in military leadership development. It ensures that leadership potential is recognized and nurtured based on clear, measurable criteria, thus preparing the military for the complexities of modern warfare.(Oldham, 2021)

METHODOLOGY

This study utilizes a qualitative research approach to explore the effectiveness of performance-based career management systems in mitigating bottlenecks in military leadership development. The qualitative method is chosen for its ability to provide deep insights into complex, context-specific phenomena, enabling a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and opportunities within military career management systems. The research employs a literature review and document analysis as its primary data collection methods, given the focus on examining existing theories, frameworks, and case studies related to career management systems and leadership development in military organizations.

Research type

This research is exploratory and descriptive in nature. The aim is to explore the existing literature on performance-based career management systems and their application in military leadership development. It seeks to describe how these systems work, how they are implemented in various military organizations, and how they address the career development bottlenecks faced by military officers. The focus is on identifying key patterns, challenges, and best practices that can guide future efforts in improving leadership development processes within the military. This exploratory approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the issue while setting the foundation for future empirical studies.

Data sources

The primary sources of data for this research include academic articles, books, reports, and official military documents. The data sources were selected based on their relevance to the research questions, their contribution to understanding career management systems in the military, and their focus on leadership development frameworks. This study draws on both primary and secondary sources. Primary sources include case studies and reports from military organizations that have implemented performance-based career management systems, while secondary sources consist of peer-reviewed journal articles, books, and government publications that discuss theoretical frameworks and practical applications related to military career management.

The sources were gathered from reputable academic databases such as Google Scholar, JSTOR, and ResearchGate, as well as defense and military-specific publications. Special attention was given to sources that discussed contemporary issues in military leadership, career progression, and talent management, with a focus on performance-based systems and their role in overcoming bottlenecks in career development.

Data collection techniques

The data collection process for this research was based on a thorough literature review and document analysis. The following techniques were used:

Literature Review: A comprehensive review of existing academic literature on performance-based

career management systems in the military and leadership development was conducted. Relevant journals, conference proceedings, books, and policy reports were systematically searched to gather insights into the evolving trends in military career development. The literature review aimed to identify gaps in existing research, particularly in terms of bottlenecks in leadership development and the implementation of performance-based systems.

Document Analysis: In addition to academic sources, official military documents and case studies were analyzed. These documents provided real-world examples of how various military organizations have implemented performance-based career systems and addressed career progression challenges. These included reports on leadership frameworks, talent management strategies, and career development practices from military organizations such as the U.S. Army, British Army, and Indian Armed Forces.

Both the literature review and document analysis provided valuable data for analyzing the current state of military career management systems and their impact on leadership development. By synthesizing information from multiple sources, the study aimed to offer a holistic view of the challenges and opportunities in performance-based career management. (Battisti et al., 2023)

Data analysis method

The data analysis was performed using qualitative content analysis, a technique that involves systematically examining the collected data to identify patterns, themes, and insights relevant to the research questions. The following steps were taken during the analysis:

Coding: Key themes and concepts related to performance-based career management, leadership development bottlenecks, and career progression were identified in the literature. These included themes such as "performance metrics," "competency-based development," "bottlenecks in promotion," "leadership frameworks," and "talent management." Each document was reviewed for the presence of these themes and coded accordingly.

Categorization: The identified codes were grouped into categories that aligned with the research objectives. For example, documents discussing challenges in leadership development were categorized under "bottlenecks," while those addressing solutions and strategies were grouped under "performance-based systems" or "competency-based frameworks."

Thematic analysis: After categorizing the data, the study examined the relationships between different themes and how they contributed to understanding the effectiveness of performance-based systems in mitigating leadership development bottlenecks. The thematic analysis helped identify key factors that influence the success of these systems, such as the clarity of performance criteria, the transparency of promotion processes, and the alignment of leadership competencies with organizational needs (Sankala, 2024).

Synthesis: The final step involved synthesizing the findings from the literature review and document analysis into a cohesive narrative. The analysis focused on drawing connections between the implementation of performance-based career management systems in different military contexts and their impact on leadership development. The goal was to highlight best practices, challenges, and opportunities for improving career progression in military organizations.

Reliability and validity

To ensure the reliability and validity of the research findings, the study employed several strategies. First, a systematic search strategy was used to identify relevant and high-quality sources of data. This included selecting only peer-reviewed academic articles and reputable military documents. Second, the analysis was conducted using a clear and transparent coding process, which was reviewed and refined throughout the research to ensure consistency. Finally, the findings were compared with existing studies on similar topics to ensure that the results were consistent with established knowledge in the field.

Ethical considerations

As this research relies on secondary data, ethical considerations were observed in the handling and analysis of publicly available documents and literature. The study ensured that all data used were

properly cited, and no personal or sensitive information from primary sources was involved in the analysis. Additionally, the research adhered to ethical standards in ensuring the objectivity and impartiality of the analysis, avoiding bias in interpreting the literature.

RESULTS

The analysis of the performance-based career management systems (PBCMS) across various military organizations reveals significant insights into how these systems are used to mitigate bottlenecks in military leadership development. The findings suggest that while traditional career management systems have long been characterized by hierarchical structures and rigid promotion protocols, performance-based models present more dynamic and transparent pathways for career progression. The key advantage of a performance-based approach lies in its ability to evaluate and promote officers based on clear and measurable competencies rather than solely on seniority or tenure. This shift in focus offers potential solutions to several common issues in military leadership development, such as stagnation, lack of motivation, and the challenge of identifying and nurturing high-potential officers.

One of the main issues identified in traditional career management systems is the inefficiency in identifying and addressing leadership gaps. In many traditional military structures, leadership progression is based on seniority and predetermined timeframes for promotions, which often leaves high-potential officers waiting for opportunities that may not come at the right time or in the right capacity. This hierarchical approach can lead to the promotion of less qualified officers simply due to their length of service or their position in the chain of command, creating leadership bottlenecks that hinder the overall effectiveness of military units. The adoption of a performance-based system seeks to address these issues by focusing on competencies and leadership effectiveness, thus ensuring that the most capable officers are identified and promoted according to their merit and readiness rather than merely their tenure.

The introduction of performance-based systems, however, is not without its challenges. One of the most significant barriers to their implementation is the shift in organizational culture required to embrace such a system. In many military organizations, the entrenched culture of seniority-based progression is deeply embedded, and the transition to performance-based systems requires careful planning, clear communication, and significant cultural change. There is often resistance to change, particularly from senior officers who have benefited from the old system and may perceive the new system as threatening their positions or reducing their influence. To successfully implement performance-based systems, military organizations need to ensure that they build a supportive environment that fosters a culture of meritocracy, transparency, and continuous development.

Moreover, performance-based systems also require robust metrics and assessment tools to effectively measure leadership competencies. The establishment of clear and consistent performance indicators is critical for ensuring that the evaluation of officers is objective, fair, and accurate. Military organizations must invest in developing these performance metrics, which may include assessments of strategic thinking, decision-making abilities, leadership in high-pressure situations, and the ability to manage complex operations. This could also involve incorporating peer and subordinate feedback, as well as self-assessments, into the evaluation process to provide a more holistic view of an officer's capabilities. The development of such evaluation tools is crucial not only to ensure the effectiveness of the promotion process but also to identify areas for individual and organizational improvement.

In addition to the inherent challenges of transitioning to a performance-based system, there are also substantial benefits to be gained. Officers who are promoted based on their competencies and achievements are more likely to be motivated and committed to their roles, knowing that their career progression is directly linked to their performance and contributions. This can lead to greater job satisfaction, higher levels of professional development, and improved leadership outcomes across the organization. Moreover, a performance-based career management system helps to better align the skills and competencies of military leaders with the strategic needs of the military, ensuring that leadership capabilities are in line with operational requirements and national defense priorities.

Furthermore, performance-based systems can foster a more inclusive and equitable environment within military organizations. By removing bias based on seniority or tenure, such systems open up opportunities for younger or less experienced officers to ascend to leadership positions. This not only

helps in preventing the stagnation of leadership positions but also encourages diversity in leadership styles and perspectives. As military organizations are increasingly faced with complex and dynamic challenges, a diverse leadership team with varied skills and perspectives is essential for adaptability and innovation. By prioritizing performance over tenure, military organizations can cultivate a leadership pipeline that is both capable and diverse, which is critical for addressing the multifaceted challenges of modern warfare.

DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

Traditional career management systems and their limitations

Traditional military career management systems are typically rooted in seniority-based frameworks, where promotions and career advancement are largely determined by an officer's years of service rather than their specific competencies or performance. This system often results in bottlenecks in leadership development as it limits the opportunity for high-potential officers to rise to critical positions based on their capabilities. One of the most significant limitations of seniority-based systems is that they may promote officers who are not necessarily the most qualified for leadership roles. This can lead to inefficiencies in leadership, where individuals may not have the requisite skills or experience for higher responsibilities, leading to stagnation and dissatisfaction within the ranks.

Such hierarchical career advancement structures, although predictable, can stifle innovation and create a sense of disillusionment among talented officers who feel their professional growth is impeded by outdated promotion criteria. A critical analysis reveals that these systems often fail to adapt to the evolving demands of modern military operations, where agility, strategic thinking, and technical expertise are increasingly necessary. As a result, the performance of military units may not reach its full potential, as leadership is often determined by rank and tenure rather than by merit and aptitude.

In this context, a performance-based career management system is proposed as a solution to these inefficiencies. By shifting the focus to performance, the military can ensure that the most capable officers rise to leadership positions. This shift would require a comprehensive assessment of an officer's competencies, including their leadership skills, decision-making abilities, and operational effectiveness, which are essential for modern military challenges.

Additionally, performance-based systems help to break the culture of complacency that seniority systems sometimes foster. They provide a more dynamic and meritocratic model of career progression, where officers are motivated to perform at their best to achieve recognition and advancement. This shift is particularly important in addressing the needs of today's diverse and complex military operations, where leaders are expected to adapt quickly and effectively to new and unpredictable challenges.

Moreover, the introduction of performance-based systems can result in a more transparent and fair system of promotions, where the selection criteria are clearly defined, reducing any potential biases that may have been present in the seniority-based approach. In conclusion, the limitations of traditional systems, when juxtaposed with the advantages of performance-based management, highlight the need for reform in military leadership development.

Table 1: Traditional career management systems with performance-based career management systems

Aspect	Traditional Career Management Systems	Performance-Based Career Management Systems	Description
Focus of Development	Seniority and experience-based progression.	Performance and merit-based progression.	Traditional systems typically prioritize tenure and experience, while performance-based systems emphasize individual

			performance and measurable outcomes.
Promotion Criteria	Often based on time in rank and seniority.	Based on demonstrated leadership, skills, and results in tasks.	Traditional systems may promote individuals after a certain number of years, while performance-based systems prioritize demonstrable skills and achievements.
Flexibility in Career Paths	More rigid and hierarchical with limited flexibility.	More flexible, focusing on skills and competencies that can vary across roles.	Traditional career systems follow a set, structured path, while performance-based systems are adaptable and align with evolving competencies and changing demands.
Leadership Development Focus	Training and experience gained through assigned roles.	Active, continuous assessment and targeted development for leadership skills.	Traditional systems focus on role experience, whereas performance-based systems emphasize targeted leadership development through ongoing evaluation.
Assessment Methodology	Primarily based on subjective evaluations from superiors.	Objective and quantifiable assessments of performance and results.	Traditional systems often depend on evaluations by superiors, which can be biased. Performance-based systems rely on measurable outcomes and peer reviews.
Transparency and Objectivity	Less transparent, with subjective decision-making.	High transparency with clear metrics and performance outcomes.	Traditional systems often lack clarity in promotion criteria and decision-making, while performance-based systems provide measurable, transparent benchmarks.
Leadership Bottlenecks	Can lead to slow advancement, creating bottlenecks due to seniority requirements.	Mitigates bottlenecks by focusing on performance rather than tenure.	Traditional systems can cause stagnation due to rigid seniority rules, while performance-based systems help overcome bottlenecks by prioritizing actual performance.

The following is a description of the explanation of the table:

1. **Focus of development:** Traditional systems focus on seniority and time spent in service, while performance-based systems focus on demonstrated performance and the ability to meet specific objectives.
2. **Promotion criteria:** Promotions in traditional systems are often given after certain time milestones (e.g., years in a rank), while performance-based systems reward specific achievements and milestones based on individual contribution and results.
3. **Flexibility in career paths:** Traditional systems can be more rigid in career progression, while performance-based systems allow for more flexibility and adaptability to individual skill sets and changing roles.
4. **Leadership development focus:** Traditional systems may emphasize gaining experience through assigned roles, while performance-based systems continuously evaluate and develop leadership qualities through regular assessments and targeted development.
5. **Assessment methodology:** Traditional systems may rely on subjective evaluations, such as peer or superior assessments that may not be entirely objective, whereas performance-based systems focus on quantifiable metrics and measurable outcomes.
6. **Transparency and objectivity:** Traditional systems may lack clear guidelines, often leading to opaque decision-making processes, whereas performance-based systems offer transparency by utilizing performance metrics.

7. **Leadership bottlenecks:** Seniority-based traditional systems can create stagnation and bottlenecks as individual's progress based on time, not capability. Performance-based systems can bypass these bottlenecks by focusing on performance as a determining factor.

The table highlights key differences in the way both systems function and the challenges associated with traditional career management approaches, particularly in military leadership development.

Key characteristics of a performance-based career management system

A performance-based career management system focuses on the competencies, achievements, and overall effectiveness of an officer rather than merely their years of service or position within the military hierarchy. The key characteristic of such a system is its emphasis on measurable performance metrics, which can include leadership effectiveness, problem-solving abilities, operational success, and the capacity for strategic decision-making. These metrics are designed to objectively evaluate an officer's readiness for higher responsibilities, ensuring that leadership roles are filled by those most suited to them.

The introduction of performance metrics in a military context also necessitates a cultural shift within the organization. Officers must be willing to accept a more rigorous evaluation process, which is often accompanied by clear expectations and feedback mechanisms. The system must also be transparent, ensuring that all officers understand the criteria by which they will be evaluated and promoted. In this environment, career development becomes more aligned with individual performance and less with subjective assessments or the influence of seniority.

Importantly, performance-based systems also offer greater flexibility in career progression. Unlike traditional systems that may limit career advancement due to rigid rank structures, a performance-based model allows for more rapid progression based on an officer's demonstrated ability. This means that officers who consistently perform at a high level can advance more quickly, encouraging them to maintain high standards and fostering a competitive yet supportive career environment.

Furthermore, performance-based systems are better equipped to address the evolving needs of modern military operations. As military tasks become more complex and multifaceted, officers must possess a wide range of skills, including technological expertise, strategic foresight, and the ability to lead diverse teams. Performance-based systems are more adaptable to these needs, allowing military organizations to prioritize the development of the competencies that are most relevant to current and future challenges.

Finally, these systems promote accountability at every level. As officers are evaluated based on their actual contributions and effectiveness, they are more likely to take responsibility for their performance. This leads to a more engaged and committed leadership corps, where individuals are driven by the desire to continuously improve and achieve excellence.

Challenges in implementing performance-based career systems

Despite the clear advantages, the transition from a seniority-based to a performance-based career management system is not without challenges. One of the primary obstacles is the cultural resistance within military organizations. Traditional hierarchies are deeply ingrained in military institutions, and officers accustomed to seniority-based progression may perceive performance-based systems as a threat to their career security. This resistance can manifest in a reluctance to embrace new evaluation methods, which could impede the effective implementation of the system.

Another challenge is the development and standardization of reliable performance metrics. Military organizations must ensure that the criteria used to assess officers are objective, fair, and relevant to the duties they perform. The creation of these metrics often requires the input of senior officers, human resources professionals, and external consultants, which can be a time-consuming process. Inaccurate or biased performance evaluations can lead to discontent and mistrust among the ranks, undermining the effectiveness of the system.

Moreover, performance-based systems may inadvertently introduce new forms of bias. If not carefully designed, the metrics used to evaluate officers could disproportionately favor certain types of performance or fail to capture the full range of leadership qualities. For example, highly visible, high-impact projects may receive more attention in performance reviews, while the steady, behind-

the-scenes work of maintaining unit cohesion and morale may be undervalued. This could lead to the underappreciation of critical leadership skills that are not immediately measurable.

Furthermore, implementing such systems requires extensive training for evaluators. Supervisors and leaders responsible for performance assessments must be trained to apply the criteria fairly and consistently. Without proper training, there is a risk that performance evaluations could become inconsistent or subjective, negating the advantages of a performance-based approach. The implementation of these systems, therefore, demands not only changes in evaluation protocols but also significant organizational investment in capacity building.

Lastly, the success of performance-based systems depends on the availability of feedback mechanisms that allow for continuous improvement. Without proper feedback loops, officers may not understand why they were promoted or why they were passed over for advancement. This lack of clarity can lead to frustration and disengagement, making it essential for the performance evaluation process to be both constructive and transparent (Ruppel et al., 2022).

Benefits of a performance-based career management system

Despite the challenges, the benefits of a performance-based career management system far outweigh the difficulties. By aligning career progression with performance, military organizations can ensure that the most qualified officers are selected for leadership roles. This leads to higher levels of competence within leadership positions, which can directly enhance the overall effectiveness of the military.

The system also fosters a more dynamic and responsive leadership pipeline. As officers are promoted based on merit, there is greater potential for younger, more innovative leaders to rise through the ranks, which can prevent stagnation within the organization. This is especially important in modern military environments, where rapid changes in technology, tactics, and strategy require leadership that is adaptable and forward-thinking.

Additionally, performance-based career management systems help to address the issue of disengagement that often arises in seniority-based systems. Officers who know their career progression is tied to their individual performance are more likely to remain motivated and engaged, knowing that their efforts will directly impact their career outcomes. This can increase overall job satisfaction and retention rates within the military, reducing the risk of losing talented officers to other sectors (Sminchise, 2016).

The system also promotes a culture of continuous professional development. As officers are regularly assessed and provided with feedback on their performance, they are encouraged to seek out opportunities for growth and improvement. This leads to a more skilled and well-rounded leadership corps, capable of addressing a broad range of military challenges with competence and confidence.

Finally, a performance-based system can increase organizational transparency and fairness. With clear, objective metrics for promotion and career advancement, officers are less likely to feel that their career prospects are influenced by factors such as favoritism or political considerations. This transparency can improve morale across the ranks and create a more equitable environment where all officers have the same opportunity to advance based on their abilities and achievements.

Future implications for military leadership development

The implementation of performance-based career management systems holds significant implications for the future of military leadership development. By prioritizing performance, military organizations are better positioned to cultivate a leadership cadre that is both capable and adaptable. This shift will be essential as the military continues to face increasingly complex and unpredictable challenges, including cyber warfare, counterterrorism operations, and peacekeeping missions in volatile regions.

Additionally, the broader adoption of performance-based systems could have positive effects on military culture. As more officers rise through the ranks based on merit, the military will likely see a shift towards a more inclusive and progressive environment. This could foster a greater sense of unity and shared purpose among officers, as they work together to achieve high standards of excellence.

Finally, the introduction of performance-based systems could lead to greater international

. As military leaders are increasingly evaluated based on their ability to perform in diverse contexts, they will be better equipped to work alongside allied forces in multinational operations. This, in turn, could enhance the effectiveness of joint operations and contribute to the overall strategic goals of international defense alliances (Hur, 2024).

Conclusions on the impact of performance-based career management

The transition to a performance-based career management system offers significant advantages in mitigating bottlenecks in military leadership development. By prioritizing performance over seniority, military organizations can ensure that the most capable officers are promoted to leadership positions, resulting in more effective and adaptive leadership. However, the successful implementation of such systems requires overcoming challenges, including resistance to change and the development of reliable performance metrics. Despite these hurdles, the long-term benefits, including enhanced competence, higher morale, and a more equitable leadership development process, make performance-based systems an essential solution for modern military organizations.

Service contracts as a binding legal agreement and selection tool in government and military service

In government and military service, service contracts function as a binding legal framework, ensuring accountability and establishing formal commitments for specific durations. These agreements are typically signed by employees as a prerequisite to entering the organization (Epstein, 2013). The mandatory nature of these contracts reflects their role as a tool for administrative management, aligning individual obligations with institutional objectives. The legal enforceability of these agreements ensures that both parties are aware of their rights and responsibilities, contributing to organizational discipline and operational efficiency (Tallberg, 2002).

The requirement to sign such contracts also acts as a selection mechanism. By committing to specific durations, potential employees demonstrate their willingness and ability to adhere to institutional demands. This process indirectly screens for individuals with the required dedication and stability to meet the organizational standards. Thus, service contracts serve not merely as formalities but as active instruments in the recruitment and retention processes, ensuring the selection of individuals who align with the organization's long-term goals (Stahl et al., 2012).

However, service contracts also include provisions for separation, whether through retirement, resignation, or termination. When an employee's service ends, the organization faces the dual responsibility of upholding legal procedures and ensuring employee welfare. It is imperative for institutions to implement structured transition processes, such as retirement plans or job reallocation programs, to maintain fairness and sustainability. Neglecting these considerations can undermine employee morale and damage the institution's reputation (Luo, 2005).

The emphasis on employee welfare post-service underscores the ethical responsibility of the government and military. Providing alternative career pathways, such as facilitating entry into civilian roles or offering vocational training, is critical. These measures not only support the individual but also enhance societal stability by reducing unemployment and fostering economic resilience. The integration of such welfare considerations into service contracts strengthens their role as comprehensive administrative tools (Hefetz & Warner, 2012).

Moreover, the documentation and administration of service contracts must be meticulously managed. Proper record-keeping ensures that all agreements are legally binding and enforceable. Such precision is vital in addressing disputes, ensuring compliance, and maintaining organizational integrity. This administrative rigor highlights the importance of service contracts as foundational documents in institutional governance (Nowell & Albrecht, 2019).

Finally, service contracts must be periodically reviewed and updated to adapt to evolving legal, economic, and societal contexts. This adaptability ensures that they remain relevant and effective, addressing contemporary challenges and aligning with global best practices. Institutions that proactively refine their contractual frameworks demonstrate a commitment to continuous improvement, balancing operational efficiency with employee well-being (Cignitas et al., 2021).

By combining legal accountability, selection criteria, and employee welfare provisions, service contracts serve as multifaceted tools in government and military administration (Almquist et al., 2013). Their effective implementation and management are essential for organizational success and

ethical governance, reinforcing their importance as both legal instruments and mechanisms for sustainable human resource management (Piwowar-Sulej, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The implementation of a performance-based career management system offers a viable solution to the bottlenecks present in traditional military leadership development. Traditional seniority-based systems, while offering predictability and structure, fail to align career progression with an officer's actual competencies and leadership capabilities. As a result, such systems can limit the rise of highly capable individuals and hinder the development of effective leadership within the military. By adopting a performance-based approach, military organizations can ensure that the most qualified officers are promoted to leadership roles based on their demonstrated skills and effectiveness rather than merely their tenure. This shift fosters a more dynamic, meritocratic leadership pipeline that is better suited to the complex and rapidly evolving demands of modern military operations.

However, while the benefits of a performance-based system are clear, its successful implementation presents several challenges. These include resistance to change within the institution, the development of accurate and fair performance metrics, and the need for extensive training for evaluators. Despite these obstacles, the long-term advantages—such as improved leadership effectiveness, increased officer engagement, and a more transparent career progression process—outweigh the difficulties. The performance-based model is essential for developing a leadership cadre capable of navigating the increasingly complex operational environments faced by modern militaries. Future research should focus on refining the performance metrics and ensuring the consistency and fairness of evaluations. Additionally, exploring the impact of such systems on officer morale and retention will provide valuable insights for further improvements.

In fulfilling their duties, both military personnel and government employees are required to sign a service bond that stipulates a specific period of service. This bond serves as a legal and administrative instrument to ensure accountability and commitment, as well as a means of selection for personnel suitability. Upon completion of the service period, mechanisms for separation, termination, or retirement may be applied to the employee, which should be carried out with due regard for their welfare. It is imperative that the government provides appropriate support for employees transitioning out of service, such as by facilitating alternative employment opportunities. This approach not only upholds ethical and social responsibilities but also ensures that the administration of service bonds is effectively managed. These service bonds act as binding legal agreements that must be properly documented and signed, serving dual purposes: maintaining institutional discipline and functioning as a selective tool for personnel management.

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