




Adequacy of career progression instructions in influencing promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force

**Authors:**

Emmanuel Sithole¹ 
Clever Madimutsa¹ 
Mulenga C. Bwalya¹ 

Affiliations:

¹Department of Government and Management Studies, School of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

Corresponding author:

Emmanuel Sithole,
emmasithole3786@gmail.com

Dates:

Received: 30 Sept. 2022
Accepted: 26 Apr. 2023
Published: 24 May 2023

How to cite this article:

Sithole, E., Madimutsa, C., & Bwalya, M.C. (2023). Adequacy of career progression instructions in influencing promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force. *African Journal of Career Development*, 5(1), a67. <https://doi.org/10.4102/ajcd.v5i1.67>

Copyright:

© 2023. The Authors.
Licensee: AOSIS. This work is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution License.

Read online:

Scan this QR code with your smart phone or mobile device to read online.

Background: Over time, the Zambia Defence Force adjusted the career progression instructions to ensure systematic and timely promotions of commissioned officers. However, the amendments did not yield the intended results.

Objectives: The study examines the adequacy of career progression instructions in influencing the promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force.

Method: This study employed a mixed-method research design which specifically applied convergent parallel design involving qualitative and quantitative research approaches. A total of 209 commissioned officers were selected using a multi-stage sampling method. Purposive sampling was used to select 12 Brigadier Generals, four from each Service. Questionnaires and an interview guide were used to collect data from commissioned officers and key informants, respectively. Statistical Package for Social Sciences and Microsoft Excel were used to analyse quantitative data, while the content and thematic analysis were used to analyse qualitative data.

Results: Most commissioned officers (84.2%) revealed that they were aware of the career progression instructions that were needed to guide their career path in the Zambia Defence Force. The majority of commissioned officers, 122, expressive of 58.3%, revealed that career progression instructions did not foster systematic promotions of commissioned officers. Furthermore, 112 commissioned officers, signifying 54.1%, indicated that their promotions were not timely.

Conclusion: The career progression instructions inadequately facilitated the career progression of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force.

Contribution: The inadequacy of career progression instructions in the Zambia Defence Force was documented in this article.

Keywords: career progression instruction; promotion; Statistical Package for Social Sciences; effectiveness; Zambia Defence Force; services.

Introduction

Worldwide, defence forces face challenges in identifying factors that ensure their commissioned officers systematically and timely rise in ranks. The career progression instructions are usually at the core to ensure that commissioned officers steadily rise in ranks. Generally, these ranks and a commission are held by military officers in a defence force and proceed as follows: Second Lieutenant, Lieutenant, Captain, Major, Lieutenant Colonel, Colonel, Brigadier General, Major General, Lieutenant General, General and Field Marshal (Guido, 1984). Since time immemorial, military ranks have been a system of hierarchical relationships in the defence forces, and they determine, among others, dominance, authority, roles and responsibilities in a military hierarchy (Mattila et al., 2017). These ranks define the career progression of commissioned officers as guided by career progression instructions. Ong'amo (2012) argued that promotion is a very attractive reward with several incentives, such as increased pay. The term 'career' refers to a 'succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige through which persons move in an ordered sequence' (Wilensky, 1961, p. 523). Furthermore, Morgan (1986) argued that each rank must have specific requirements and a salary and conditions to be earned and enjoyed, respectively. These prerequisites determine a career path for commissioned officers (Cao & Thomas, 2013). However, before these ranks come into effect, myriad factors influence their attainment (Mullins, 2010). For instance,

Koontz (1993) cited the length of service as influencing employee promotion in organisations, while other related factors are enshrined in the career progression instructions. Therefore, Bellany (1995) argued that there was a need to evenly apply the instructions for the benefit of all concerned.

In the Zambia Defence Force, commissioned officers have made several adjustments to the career progression instructions. However, the system continues to be characterised by unpredictable and unsystematic promotions of commissioned officers. Reports indicate that, on average, about 2% of commissioned officers retire as majors after serving for about 30 years (Sibamba, 2010). Despite well-outlined prerequisites for promotion, the system continues to be associated with the selective application of career progression instructions following known and unknown factors when promoting commissioned officers. Most commissioned officers are promoted three times in 30 years from Second Lieutenant to Lieutenant, Lieutenant to Captain and Captain to Major. Nonetheless, some commissioned officers rise very fast against the number of years served in the services. Such officers quickly climb the ladder without experience, skills and competence. For instance, some commissioned officers attain the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after serving for 12 years only. They even bypass those who joined the service earlier (Wiernek, 2003).

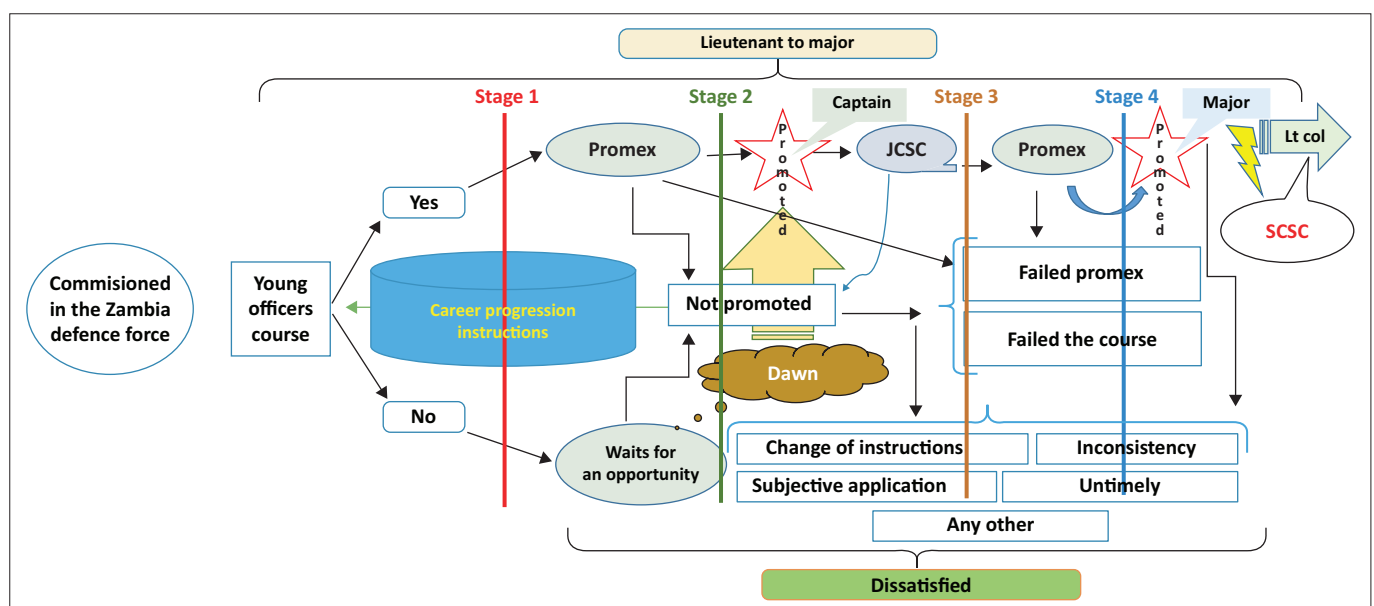
Furthermore, Patton and McMahon (2006) argued that a career must be understood as unfolding in a series of developmental stages. Each stage must be characterised by specific tasks and prerequisites to be attained to advance to another stage. Ideally, the adjustments to the career progression instructions were expected to resolve the problems mentioned above by earnestly following the instructions. However, this is not the case. Therefore, this situation raises questions regarding the adequacy of career progression instructions that influence career

progression for commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force.

Conceptual framework

The conceptual framework in Figure 1 outlines the career progression of a Zambian citizen joining the Zambia Defence Force. This conceptual framework was informed by the self-concept theory of career development (Super, 1957, 1963, 1990). The assumption based on this theory is that, according to Wilensky, (1961, p. 523), a career involves a 'succession of related jobs, arranged in a hierarchy of prestige through which persons move in an ordered, more-or-less predictable sequence'. This is supported by Weinert (2001), who revealed that a career is a pattern of work experiences comprising a greater portion of one's life and relates to several phases or stages reflecting the transition from one stage of life to the next. Furthermore, Schreuder and Coetzee (2006) postulate that a career consists of different stages. The individual is faced with different issues during each stage. Additionally, career progression entails the management of a person's growth and development in his or her working life (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). In this regard, career progression instructions are expected to manage commissioned officers' promotions at every stage.

Furthermore, stage one in Figure 1 involved undergoing a Young Officer's Course to be eligible for promotion examination (PROMEX) in stage two. The clearance of promotion examinations paved the way for promotion from Lieutenant to Captain in stage three. In the same stage, a captain becomes eligible to go for Junior Command and Staff Course (JCSC). The successful completion of JCSC made commissioned officers sit for PROMEX (in stage four), which, when once cleared, the commissioned officers earned a Major's rank. The eligibility for promotion from Major to Lieutenant Colonel was successfully undergoing Senior Command and Staff Course (SCSC). Despite being in need of a promotion,



JCSC, junior command and staff course; SCSC, Senior command and staff course; Lt Col; Lieutenant Colonel

FIGURE 1: Diagrammatic layout of the conceptual framework.

commissioned officers sometimes fail to pass a course or promotion examination. Consequently, they anxiously wait for an opportunity. As a result, at whatever stage, they become dissatisfied with their work. However, once a course or PROMEX opportunity dawns, they are promoted. There was a need for career progression instructions to ensure that the promotion desires of commissioned officers were timely met.

Aim

The study examines the adequacy of career progression instructions in influencing the promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force.

Specific objectives

- To examine the levels of awareness among commissioned officers of the availability of their career progression instructions.
- To analyse how effective career progression instructions fostered systematic promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force.
- To establish career progression instructions' ability to ensure timely promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force.

Research methodology

Research design

In this study, a mixed-method research design was adopted. This was a convergent parallel design which combined tenets of qualitative and quantitative approaches employed in the process of collecting and analysing data (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Nachmias (1976) posits that mixed methods research design involved the collection of data from open-ended, as well as closed-ended questions. The qualitative approach focused on the collection of non-numerical data, while the quantitative approach focused on the collection of numerical data and statistical analysis in order to explain, control or predict phenomena of interest (Gay & Airasian, 2000).

Study setting

This research focused on the three Zambia Defence Force services: the Zambia Army, the Zambia Air Force and the Zambia National Service. They fall under the Zambia Defence Force and their formations, units and departments spread across the country. The Zambia Defence Force was chosen because it was an employer of the commissioned officers and the implementer of the career progression instructions. The research covered the whole country because the subjects from the three services were spread across the country in the 10 provinces of Zambia.

Study population and sample size

The target population constituted all commissioned officers from the Zambia Defence Force. The Zambia Defence Force

employed a total of 2200 commissioned officers from the three services broken down as follows: (1) Zambia Army, 1000 (Zambia Army, 2019), (2) Zambia Air Force 700 (Zambia Air Force, 2019) and (3) Zambia National Service (2019) 500 commissioned officers. This study's total sample size was 221 respondents, including 12 key informants.

The sample size was calculated from the target population using the formula postulated by Yamane (1967). The planning parameters used were a 95% confidence level, a maximum variability level, $P = 0.5$ and the desired level of precision of $\pm 10\%$:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)(e)} \quad [\text{Eqn 1}]$$

In the equation, n represents sample size, N depicts the population size and e is the desired level of precision. The N is 2200, the target population of commissioned officers from the Zambia Defence Force across the 10 provinces found in Zambia:

$$n = \frac{2200}{1 + 2200(0.01)(0.01)} = 186 \quad [\text{Eqn 2}]$$

This sample size formula provided the number of responses which is 186, that needed to be obtained. However, Israel (1992) argued that a good number of researchers usually add 10% to cater for the persons that the researcher cannot contact. Additionally, non-responses are usually compensated by increasing the sample size by 30%. The researcher added 15% (34) to reach the 220 sample size in this research. This was meant to cater for a minimum of 10% of the target populations of the three services. The initially planned sample size was 220 subjects and 12 key informants from the three services. However, because of the problem of non-responses, the final sample size was reduced to 209 subjects. Hence, the total was 221 respondents, including 12 key informants. Therefore, the sample size was significantly larger than the number required for this desired level of confidence and precision.

Sampling strategy

This study applied various sampling methods that primarily fall into probability and non-probability. In the probability method, the individuals had an equal chance of being part of the sample. These methods are explained below.

Selection of key informants

Purposive sampling was employed to select heads of units responsible for formulating and implementing the career progression instructions. Purposive sampling is a non-random method of data collection (Zhi, 2014). In this technique, the researcher identified and selected proficient and well-informed individuals on the social phenomenon under study. Additionally, purposive sampling involved identifying individuals with the knowledge, experience and ability to articulate and express the subject matter in a reflective manner (Bernard, 2002). Hence, 12 commissioned officers were

selected from the three services: the Ministry of Defence (three Deputy Secretaries), Training Branch (three Chiefs of Training), Administration Branch (three Chiefs of Administration) and Copperbelt Command (Brigade Commander 3 Infantry Brigade, Air Officer Commanding Northern Air Operational Command and Provincial Coordinator).

Selection of respondents

The process of selecting participants in all three services, namely, Zambia Army, Zambia Air Force and Zambia National Service was guided by a multi-stage sampling method. Different sampling methods were employed at each stage (Nafiu et al., 2013). This involved narrowing the scope from the multitude of commissioned officers in each service to arrive at specific ones who filled in the questionnaire.

The first stage was cluster sampling, primarily dividing the target population geographically into distinct and identifiable units. Because the target population was commissioned officers across the country, these clusters were based on the existing provinces. Consequently, there were 10 sampling units.

The second stage was identifying and generating all workplaces for the commissioned officers across the country from the 10 clusters. After that, the required number of units were randomly selected. Each workplace in the provinces and each member of the study population had an equal chance of being selected. The probability of a member of the population being selected was not affected by the selection of other members (Cohen et al., 2000).

The third stage used systematic random sampling to select the commissioned officers from the randomly selected units, bases, branches, directorates, formations and commands across the 10 provinces. The starting point was identified. After that, every K th element was selected. This depended on the population of the selected categories or camps.

For instance, the commissioned officers' population was established to select a sample of two respondents from a Zambia National Service – Chisamba Camp. The sampling interval K using the formula $K = N/n$, was used.

N was the total number of officers while n was the sample size; therefore, $K = 10/2 = 5$.

Therefore, if the first randomly selected officer was two, the next was officer seven.

Every K th number was included in the sample up to the total number of respondents required in each category. From each camp across the country, offices occupied by those selected commissioned officers were identified. Thereafter, a questionnaire was administered to the commissioned officers. After completion, questionnaires were placed in a box labelled 'research' which was centrally located in the registry. The same sampling procedures were applied in

selecting respondents in all the services: (1) the Zambia Army, (2) Zambia Air Force and (3) Zambia National Service. Additionally, it involved selecting particular units by the researcher from the target population, for which the findings could be inferred to the population (Gupta & Gupta, 2013).

Firstly, the multi-stage sampling method was adopted because it worked well for studies that cover a wider geographical area where a complete list of population members was unavailable. This research looked at commissioned officers across Zambia. Secondly, this type was cost-effective and time-effective as it enabled the researcher to reduce the large population into manageable smaller or sub-groups. Thirdly, these smaller groups subsequently gave the researcher the flexibility to select the sample carefully. Fourthly, the various stages made primary data collection easy and simpler for the researcher. This directly resulted from gradually reducing a huge population into practicable smaller sub-groups.

Methods of data collection

Qualitative and quantitative data were collected. Qualitative data were collected using semi-structured interviews with key informants. Pre-written questions in the interview guide guided this interview. These questions were in line with specific objectives. Semi-structured interviews enabled the researcher to obtain detailed information while controlling the interview topic. Quantitative data were collected using a questionnaire composed of a series of well-structured questions in line with the specific objectives. Hence, empirical information from respondents on career progression instructions were gathered in an organised manner using a questionnaire.

Data analysis methods

Quantitative data were analysed using two computer software packages called Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) and Microsoft Excel. These software generated frequency figures, tables and graphs for the investigated variables. Qualitative data, on the other hand, was analysed using content and thematic analysis. The researcher identified and noted specific phrases, words or concepts within the studied text and spoken words. Thematic analysis was, therefore, more appropriate for analysing data, as the research aimed at attaining information to ascertain the relationship between themes. Through this method, appropriate themes emerged. These included length of service, academic and non-academic factors that affected career progression.

Research ethics

The researcher sought for authority to conduct the study which was granted by the Commanders of the respective services. The anonymity of the respondents was ensured by not indicating their names on the questionnaire. Confidentiality and anonymity were the two ethical concerns that were observed during the study.

Findings and discussion

The findings were logically presented: (1) qualitative findings complemented quantitative findings and (2) vice-versa coupled with the literature that either supported the findings or not.

Awareness of the availability of career progression instructions

The Adjutant General (interview, 21 June 2021) and the Chiefs of Administration (interview, 28 June 2021) from the three Services, that is, Zambia Army, Zambia Air Force and Zambia National Service, respectively, indicated that career progression instructions were available in the three wings of the Zambia Defence Force. However, in the interviews on 21 June 2021 and 28 June 2021, different names were used to refer to career progression policies or instructions, as indicated below:

For the Zambia Army, Staff Duties (SD) Instructions and Adjutant General (AG) Instructions were nomenclatures used to represent the career progression instruction. In contrast, the term used was Administrative Instructions for the Zambia Air Force and Zambia National Service.

These instructions prescribed the prerequisites to be met before commissioned officers were promoted and generally how the career progression of commissioned officers was supposed to be in the services. These instructions, generally called career progression instructions, clearly stipulated how commissioned officers were required to progress systematically from one rank to the other. For instance, in the Zambia Air Force, after completing officer cadet training at Zambia Air Force Academy (ZAFA), a Second Lieutenant was eligible for promotion to Full Lieutenant after serving for 2 years. The commissioned officer needed to be medically fit for the branch and not facing disciplinary action. These instructions on the promotions of Second Lieutenant to full Lieutenant were similar to the ones found in the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service career progression instructions.

Like the Services in the Zambia Defence Force, other militaries in African countries use different names to mean career progression instructions. The Namibia Defence Force had an instruction to guide the career progression of commissioned officers in the Artillery corps called Career Development and Progression Policy (Amakutuwa, 2011). In the Slovenian Army, it was called Officer Career Development System (Rijavec, 2013). Although with different names, Hoffman (2008) indicated it as Manpower Management Officers

Assignment in the United States Marine Corps. In the Nigeria Army, it was named Career Management Policy (Abubakar, 2016). This shows that most defence and armed forces possessed policies or instructions that guided the career paths of commissioned officers, although with varying names. These career progression instructions were largely promulgated to the commissioned officers.

Despite the above assertions that career progression instructions were available in the services, the findings in Table 1 reveal that a significant number of commissioned officers, 31, depicting 14.8%, were unaware of the career progression instructions that guided their career path in Zambia Defence Force. Although career progression is critical in the Zambia Defence Force, many commissioned officers were left uninformed on the subject matter. This means there was a lack of sensitisation or education on the availability of these instructions. This situation left commissioned officers unaware of what they needed to do to be promoted. Consequently, this gave rise to arbitrary decisions with regard to the promotion of commissioned officers. This lack of knowledge on commissioned officers' promotion parameters implied that commissioned officers did not influence their career progression in the Zambia Defence Force. This situation interrogates the adequacy and credibility of career progression instructions in the Zambia Defence Force.

The study further analysed the data on levels of awareness of the available career progression instructions by ranks. Table 2 displays the findings in this regard: three Brigadier Generals, eight Colonels, 44 Lieutenant Colonels, 50 Majors, 54 Captains and 19 Lieutenants knew that career progression instructions guided their career progression. The findings revealed that the awareness levels increased as the commissioned officers ascended in ranks. This implies that their understanding of career progression broadened as commissioned officers ascended in ranks. The understanding of the career progression came with ranks attained by commissioned officers.

This finding is supported by data in Figure 2, which shows that young officers were not aware of the availability of

TABLE 1: Distribution of responses on the awareness of career progression instructions.

Count	Frequency	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid			
Yes	178	85.2	85.2
No	31	14.8	100.0
Total	209	100.0	-

TABLE 2: Distribution of responses on the levels of awareness of career progression instructions guiding the promotion of commissioned officers by rank.

Count	Rank						Total
	Lieutenant	Captain	Major	Lieutenant Colonel	Colonel	Brigadier General	
Is there a career progression instruction guiding the promotion of commissioned officers?							
Yes	19/76%	54/84%	50/86%	44/88%	8/89%	3/100%	178
No	6	10	8	6	1	0	31
Total	25	64	58	50	9	3	209

Note: Bold percentages are meant to interpret the statistic.

career progression instructions. This implies that access to information regarding career progression instruction was a preserve of senior officers in the Zambia Defence Force. This means that junior commissioned officers were not sensitised on career progression instructions, hence, remained blank on the articles contained therein. Furthermore, they did not know what was expected of them to be promoted. As a result, some commissioned officers did not influence their promotions because of a lack of knowledge on the prerequisites for promotion. The discrepancy between the rank held by the commissioned officer and the flow of needed information pointed to the inadequacy of the career progression instructions.

Furthermore, the 100% recorded by the Brigadier Generals indicated that higher ranks were well informed on what was expected of commissioned officers to be promoted, as depicted in Figure 2. This was not the case with commissioned officers holding lower ranks. Generally, there was a lack of exposure to the operations of the services concerning career progression once commissioned officers joined the services. Specifically, newly commissioned officers were unaware of the career progression instructions that guided their career path. However, as they ascended in ranks, there was the acquisition of knowledge on the availability of career progression instructions in the Zambia Defence Force. Although it occurred relatively late in their career, commissioned officers were enlightened on the prerequisites for promotions. Consequently, commissioned officers influenced their career progression.

These findings on career progression enlightenment moving in tandem with ranks attained are supported by Pergamit and Veum's (1999) works. They argued that the more the number of commissioned officers was elevated in ranks, the better they understood the operations of the Services as far as promotions were concerned. This was supported by Ting (1997), who argued that the more civil servants were promoted, the more they understood the dynamics involved in the promotion. Similarly, the majority of respondents from this research, on average, experienced a good number of promotions, bringing insight into the career path based on their experiences.

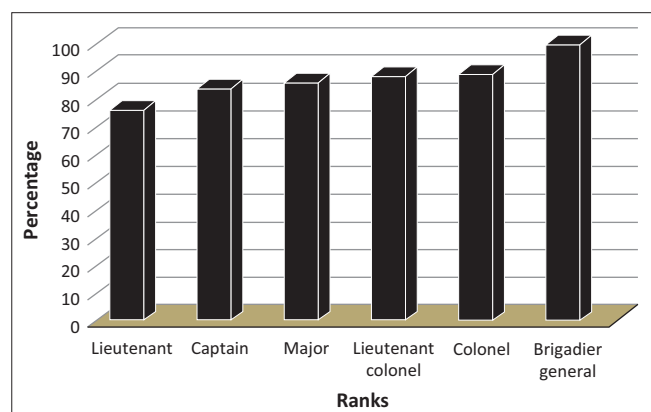


FIGURE 2: Ranks structure against levels of awareness of the availability of career progression instructions for promotions of commissioned officers.

Additionally, the Chief of Training (interview, 21 June 2021) from the Zambia Army shared similar views on the relationship between the rising in ranks and the awareness of commissioned officers of the career progression instructions. He indicated that:

[O]nce commissioned officers joined the Zambia Army, their view of the system was very narrow in depth and breadth. This was necessitated by the lack of exposure to how the Zambia Army operated. The small area of responsibility contributed to this narrow-mindedness of commissioned officers on career progression issues in the Zambia Army.

The Chief of Training (interview, 28 June 2021) from the Zambia Air Force further revealed that:

Junior commissioned officers did not know the instructions that guided their promotions because of the limited subject matter covered during the initial training. Further, these commissioned officers had limited scope of the Force at the time of entry, including the earlier years of their career in the Zambia Air Force.

The Chief of Administration (interview, 28 June 2021) from the Zambia National Service indicated that:

The absence of an induction training cadre once commissioned officers joined the service contributed to the narrow scope of commissioned on several matters, including tenets that guided their career progression. Additionally, the periodic indabas were insufficient to cover specific matters affecting commissioned officers, especially junior ones.

Career progression instructions' ability in fostering systematic promotions

Table 3 shows that career progression instructions did not promote systematic promotions among commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force. The majority of commissioned officers, 122 (87 and 35, expressive of 58.3%) out of 209, revealed that career progression instructions did not effectively, and very ineffectively, respectively, foster systematic promotions of commissioned officers. A fraction of 41.7% pointed out that career progression instructions effectively facilitated systematic promotions among commissioned officers. The majority revealed that career progression instructions did not effectively foster the systematic promotion of commissioned officers. Consequently, this resulted in irregular and uneven promotions among commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force. This implies that the promotions of commissioned officers were not thorough and systematic.

TABLE 3: Distribution of the responses on the effectiveness of career progression instructions to foster systematic promotions of commissioned officers in service.

Count	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid				
Very effective	28	13.4	13.4	13.4
Effective	59	28.2	28.2	41.6
Not effective	87	41.6	41.6	83.3
Very ineffective	35	16.7	16.7	100.0
Total	209	100.0	100.0	-

Instead, they were marred by irregularities and a lack of outstanding and long-lasting specific plans or methods.

The failure of the career progression instructions to foster systematic promotion of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force was also observed and experienced by the Deputy Secretaries (interview, 11 May 2021) from the Ministry of Defence, who indicated that:

Although systematic promotions for commissioned officers were the sole purpose of the career progression instructions, these instructions were devoid of the mechanisms that ensured systematic promotions of commissioned officers. (Deputy Army Secretary, interview, 11 May 2021)

Ideally, the career progression instruction was meant to ensure that commissioned officers systematically rose in ranks. However, in reality, commissioned officers were uncoordinatedly promoted. No known plan was employed when promoting commissioned officers. (Deputy Force Secretary, interview, 11 May 2021)

The career progression instruction did not provide substantial details on promotion examinations and prerequisite courses to be done by commissioned officers. Consequently, this created chaos on the parameters to be followed to foster systematic promotions of commissioned officers. However, commissioned officers were required to go for courses, military and civilian. (Deputy Service Secretary, interview, 11 May 2021)

Respondents and Deputy Secretaries revealed that career progression instructions failed to support commissioned officers' systematic promotions. The adequacy of the career progression instructions was in jeopardy as they did not provide the parameters that effectively fostered systematic promotions of commissioned officers.

Figure 3 shows that career progression instructions from the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service did not promote systematic officer promotions. The majority of respondents, 65 (that is, 46 and 19), expressive of 70% from the Zambia Army, informed the study that generally, career progression instructions did not effectively foster systematic promotions of commissioned officers. Similar findings were revealed by respondents from the Zambia National Service, where the majority of commissioned officers, 31 (that is, 24 and 7), signifying 62% indicated the failure of the career

progression instruction to foster systematic promotions. This implies that commissioned officers experienced uneven and uncoordinated promotions in the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service.

On the contrary, Figure 4 displays that the majority of commissioned officers, 40 (i.e. 14 and 26) representing 61% from the Zambia Air Force, informed the study that career progression instruction fostered systematic promotions. This means that the Zambia Air Force performed relatively well on this facet than the two ground services, that is, the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service. This means that commissioned officers from the Zambia Air Force had a fixed promotion system known and understood by commissioned officers. Furthermore, commissioned officers were promoted when they met the prerequisites. Additionally, the implication of this is that the two Services were not keen on following and ensuring that the tenets that determined the career progression of commissioned officers were earnestly followed. Consequently, there were unsystematic and unmethodical promotions of commissioned officers. This means that career progression instructions in the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service failed to foster the systematic promotion of commissioned officers.

In line with the findings from the Zambia Air Force, Burger (1979) found that systematic promotions of air force commissioned officers in the South African Air Force (SAAF) were a direct result of a feasible career plan driven by good career progression instruction. A viable career plan was at play in ensuring the systematic career progression of commissioned officers in the SAAF. The works of Eck (2007) were similar to the findings from the Zambia Air Force as they revealed that the Officer Management Policy effectively promoted commissioned Marine officers from Major through to Brigadier General's ranks. Hernandez (2011) argued that flexible implementation of career progression instructions influenced systematic promotions of employees. The career progression instructions, in either case, facilitated effective commissioned officers' promotions in the reviewed institutions.

The Chief of Training (interview, 28 June 2021) from the Zambia National Service supported this finding on the failure

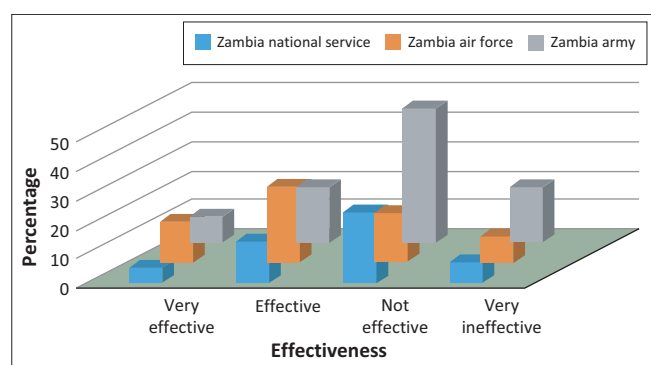


FIGURE 3: Distribution of responses on whether the career progression instructions effectively fostered systematic promotions of commissioned officers in your service.

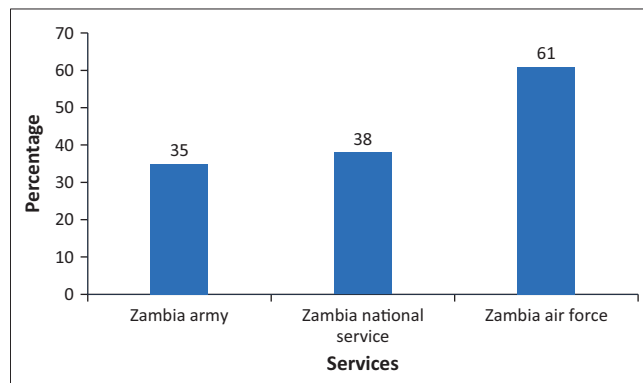


FIGURE 4: Effectiveness of career progression instructions in fostering systematic promotions of commissioned officers in the services.

TABLE 4: Distribution of responses on the perception of the timeliness of the promotion in the Zambia Defence Force.

Count	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid				
Yes	95	45.5	45.9	45.9
No	112	53.6	54.1	100.0
Missing				
Non response	2	1.0	-	-
Total	209	100.0	-	-

of the career progression instruction to foster systematic promotions of commissioned officers. He indicated that the career progression instruction in the Zambia National Service was not adequate to foster systematic career progression of commissioned officers. This was further supported by the Chief of Administration from the Zambia Army (interview, 21 June 2021), who revealed that career progression instruction in the Zambia Army did not cover all the needed details to foster systematic and timely promotions of commissioned officers. The findings from the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service were supported by the findings from the study done by Gilroy (2002) on the same facet. The study was conducted on the active duty commissioned officers in the four branches of the United States of America's Department of Defense (DoD). The findings from the DoD revealed that very few from the four branches experienced unsystematic promotions. The stagnation marred their promotions despite meeting the promotion strategies.

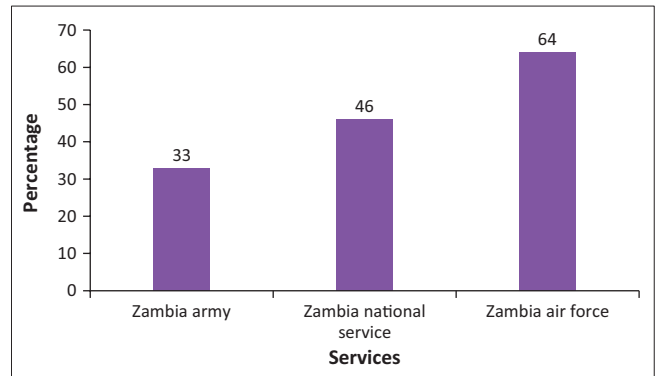
Timeliness of the promotions received by commissioned officers

Table 4 shows the timeliness of past commissioned officers' promotions. Out of 209 commissioned officers, 112, signifying 54.1%, indicated that their promotions were not timely. On the contrary, 95 commissioned officers expressive of 45.9% revealed that their promotions were timely, with 1% uncommitted. The majority of commissioned officers revealed that their previous promotions were not timely. Therefore, this implied that commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force had delayed or accelerated promotions. Although not preview to the reasons for these scenarios, many factors were at play in either accelerated or delayed promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force. Generally, this presented faulty and inadequate career progression instructions in the Zambia Defence Force.

The experiences and observations of the Deputy Army Secretary (interview, 11 May 2021) were in tandem with the above findings on the untimely promotions of commissioned officers. He revealed that:

The career progression instructions were not fully implemented to ensure the timely promotions of commissioned officers. Timely or untimely promotions came at the backdrop of benchmarks on timelines, which were absent in the career progression instructions in the Zambia Army.

The Deputy Force Secretary (interview, 11 May 2021) further revealed that:

**FIGURE 5:** Perceptions of the timeliness of the promotions by service.

There was a lack of scheduled timings for the sitting of the Defence Council for the Zambia Army and the Zambia Air Force and the Promotion Board for the Zambia National Service. This implied that Commanders and the availability of the Commander-in-Chief largely determined the time for the promotions of commissioned officers. The system was centralised; hence, it usually negated career progression instructions.

The Chief of Administration (interview, 28 June 2021) from the Zambia National Service revealed that:

Delayed promotions of some of the commissioned officers were a direct consequence of poor staff work by those staff officers mandated to timely submit the needed documents to support the promotions of commissioned officers. The career progression instruction was devoid of the dates for submissions of the needed documents to facilitate the promotions of commissioned officers.

Generally, the findings revealed that there were untimely promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force. Similarly, the findings from Smith's (2019) research revealed that despite the US Department of Defense's desire to ensure timely promotion opportunities for commissioned officers in all of the Services, most of the promotions were not timely because of changes and delays in the authorisation. Consequently, there were fluctuations in promotions to the next higher grade in both the time in service and time in grade for commissioned officers. The reviewed study revealed that bureaucracy was at play in these circumstances.

Figure 5 is a graphical depiction of the findings that shows the timeliness of promotions of commissioned officers in the Services. The Zambia Air Force had the most commissioned officers who revealed their timely promotions. This was contrary to the findings from commissioned officers of the two ground-based services, the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service. This implies that some commissioned officers from the Zambia Air Force were promoted based on the career progression schedule, unlike those from the Zambia Army and the Zambia National Service.

Time commissioned officers waited before promotion

The findings on how long commissioned officers had to wait before being promoted to their current ranks are

TABLE 5: Distribution of responses on whether they knew how long they had to wait before being promoted to their current rank.

Count	Frequency	Percent	Valid percent	Cumulative percent
Valid				
Yes	90	43.1	43.5	43.5
No	117	56.0	56.5	100.0
Not applicable	2	1.0	-	-
Total	209	100.0	-	-

TABLE 6: Distribution of responses on whether they knew how long they had to wait before being promoted to their current rank by service.

Count	Service or branch in the Zambia Defence Force			Total
	Zambia Army	Zambia Air Force	Zambia National Service	
Did you know how long you had to wait before being promoted to the current rank?				
Yes	28	42	20	90
No	65/ 70%	22/ 34%	30/ 60%	117
Total	93	64	50	207

Note: Bold percentages are meant to interpret the statistic.

displayed in Table 5. The majority of respondents, 117, out of 209, expressive of 56.5%, revealed that they did not know how long they were expected to wait for them to be promoted. On the contrary, 90 commissioned officers signifying 43.5%, knew how long they were expected to wait before being promoted to their current rank. A significantly high number of commissioned officers did not know when they were supposed to be promoted. This implies that there were faulty channels of communication. Alternatively, the career progression instructions did not explicitly state the period commissioned officers were expected to wait at every rank before being considered for the next promotion. It was unclear how long commissioned officers would have to wait before being promoted. Generally, the Deputy Secretaries (interview, 11 May 2021) from the Ministry of Defence informed the study that it was very difficult for commissioned officers to know the time they needed to wait before being promoted to their current ranks because of a lack of details.

The findings on the respective services on the period or time commissioned officers had to wait before being promoted are displayed in Table 6. Out of 64 respondents, 42, signifying 66% of commissioned officers from the Zambia Air Force informed the study that they knew the period they needed to wait before being promoted to their current ranks. This implies objectivity, transparency and periodic exchange of information on promotions coupled with complete details enshrined in the career progression instruction regarding the period commissioned officers needed to wait before being promoted. This was supported by the Chief of Administration (interview, 28 June 2021) from the Zambia Air Force, who revealed that commissioned officers generally knew the years or time when they were expected to wait before being promoted. There was a general understanding among commissioned officers of the time they needed to wait before being promoted. Additionally, the Air Officer Commanding (interview, 04 May 2021) amplified these findings when he revealed how individual commissioned officers progressed and provided

a hint on how much time they needed to wait before being promoted to their current ranks. This implied that the career progression instruction did not spell out the timings; however, commissioned officers depended on gut feelings to know the timelines for their promotions.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings revealed that although career progression instructions were available in the services, they did not foster systematic and timely promotions of commissioned officers in the Zambia Defence Force. This implies that career progression instructions in all the Services were inadequate as they did not influence the career progression of commissioned officers. Despite making this contribution, the article could not casually infer the findings on other defence forces. Future research can focus on career progression instructions across some African defence forces.

Acknowledgements

The authors thank Florence Tembo Mpandamabula for her professional editorial work that shaped the final outlook of this article.

Competing interests

The authors declare that they have no financial or personal relationships that may have inappropriately influenced them in writing this article.

Authors' contributions

E.S. wrote the article with input, guidance and supervision of C.M. and M.C.B.

Ethical considerations

Ethical approval to conduct the study was obtained from the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee University of Zambia on 08 February 2021 (reference no. HSSREC: 2021 Feb-008).

Funding information

This research received no specific grant from any funding agency in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

Data availability

The authors confirm that the data supporting the findings of this study are available within the article.

Disclaimer

The views expressed in the submitted article are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the official position of the Zambia Defence Force.

References

- Abubakar, U. (2016). *Career management of officers in the Nigerian Army (1970–2014)*. Nigerian Defence Academy. Retrieved from <https://ssrn.com/abstract=2722249>
- Amakutuwa, J.J.M. (2011). *The effectiveness of career development policy for commissioned officers in the Namibian Defense Force (N.D.F.): An analysis of the Artillery Brigade Officers' Corps*. Master's dissertation, The University of Namibia Press.
- Bellany, G. (1995). *Recruitment, retention, wastage, and retirement: Career patterns in the officer corps of the British Armed Services*. Master's thesis, University of Lancaster.
- Bernard, H.R. (2002). *Research methods in anthropology: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (3rd ed.). Alta Mira Press.
- Burger, H.J.P. (1979). *An investigation of the current validity of career planning in hierarchically structured organizations such as the South African Air Force*. University of Cape Town.
- Cao, J., & Thomas, D. (2013). *When developing a career path, what are the key elements to include?* Cornell University Press.
- Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K.C. (2000). *Research methods in education*. Routledge Flamer.
- Creswell, J.W., & Plano Clark, V.L. (2011). *Designing and conducting mixed method research* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Eck, L.R. (2007). *Marine Corps Joint Officer Management Policy and O-7 Joint Service Officer requirements*. Naval Postgraduate School.
- Gay, L.R., & Airasian, P. (2000). *Windows statistics to accompany educational research: Competencies for analysis and application* (6th ed.). Prentice-Hall.
- Gilroy, G. (2002). *Career progression of minority and women officers: Office of the Under Secretary of Defense Personnel and Readiness*. Capitol Hill.
- Guido, R. (1984). *World army badges and insignia since 1939*. Blandford Press.
- Gupta, M., & Gupta, D. (2013). *Research methodology*. PHI Learning Ltd.
- Gyansah, S., & Guantai, K.H. (2018). Career development in organisation: Placing the organisation and the employee on the same pedestal to enhance maximum productivity. *European Journal of Business and Management*, 10(14), 32–54.
- Hernandez, D.J. (2011). *Building strategic leader competencies into army officer development and career progression*. U.S. Army War College.
- Hoffman, J.M. (2008). *Significant factors in predicting promotion to major, lieutenant colonel, and Colonel in the United States Marine Corps*. Naval Post Graduate School.
- Israel, G.D. (1992). *Sampling the evidence of extension program impact program evaluation and organizational development*. University of Florida.
- Koontz, H. (1993). *Management: Global perspective*. McGraw Hill.
- Mattila, J., Tukiainen, S., & Kajalo, S. (2017). Meaning of military ranks. *Defence Studies*, 17(4), 359–378. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14702436.2017.1364967>
- Morgan, G. (1986). *Images of organisations*. Sage.
- Mullins, L. (2010). *Management and organizational behaviour* (9th ed.). Prentice-Hall.
- Nachmias, D. (1976). *Research methods in the social sciences*. Arnold Press.
- Nafiu, L.A., Oshungade, I.O., & Adewara, A.A. (2013). Generalization of multistage cluster sampling using finite population. *International Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*, 3(1), 17–20.
- Ong'amo, L.S.O. (2012). *Perceived factors influencing employee promotion in Mumias Sugar Company limited*. University of Nairobi.
- Patton, W., & McMahon, M. (2006). *Career development and systems theory: A new relationship* (2nd ed.). Cole Publishing Co.
- Pergamit, M.R., & Veum, J.R. (1999). What is a promotion? *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 52(4), 581–601. <https://doi.org/10.1177/001979399905200405>
- Rijavec, M. (2013). *The future of officer career development system in The Slovenian Armed Forces*. Naval University Press.
- Schreuder, A.M.G., & Coetzee, M. (2006). *Careers: An organisational perspective*. Juta & Co.
- Sibamba, H. (2010). *My autobiography about the Zambia Army*. Army Headquarters.
- Smith, S. (2019). *Military commissioned officer promotions: A look at the standard officer promotion rates and times*. Retrieved May 24, 2021, from <https://www.liveabout.com/military-commissioned-officer-promotions-4055887nccareers>
- Super, D.E. (1957). *The psychology of careers*. Harper & Row.
- Super, D.E. (1963a). Self-concepts in vocational development. In D.E. Super, R. Starishevsky, N. Matlin, & J. P. Jordaan (Eds.), *Career development: Self-concept theory* (pp. 1–26). New York College Printers.
- Super, D.E. (1963b). Vocational development in adolescence and early adulthood: Tasks and behaviors. In D.E. Super, R. Starishevsky, N. Matlin, & J.P. Jordaan (Eds.), *Career development: Self-concept theory* (pp. 79–95). College Entrance Examination Board.
- Super, D.E. (1990). A life-span, life-space approach to career development. In D. Brown, & L. Brooks (Eds.), *Career choice and development: Applying contemporary theories to practice* (2nd ed., pp. 197–261). Jossey-Bass.
- Ting, Y. (1997). Determinants of job satisfaction of federal government employees. *Public Personnel Management*, 26(3), 313–334. <https://doi.org/10.1177/009102609702600302>
- Weinert, A.B. (2001). *Psychology of career development* (pp. 1471–1476). International Encyclopaedia of the Social & Behavioural Sciences, Elsevier Science.
- Wiernek, B. (2003). *Professional development and career paths of employees: Management of employees*, McGraw.
- Wilensky, H.L. (1961). Careers, lifestyles, and social integration. *International Social Science Journal*, 12(6), 553–538.
- Yamane, T. (1967). *Statistics: An introductory analysis* (2nd ed.). Harper and Row.
- Zambia Army. (2019). *2019 seniority roll for commissioned officers*. Zambia Army.
- Zambia Air Force. (2019). *2019 seniority roll for commissioned officers*. Zambia Air Force.
- Zambia National Service. (2019). *Seniority roll for commissioned officers in 2019*. Zambia National Service.
- Zhi, H.L. (2014). A comparison of convenience sampling and purposive sampling. *Hu Li Za Zhi*, 61(3), 105–111.