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**PERCEIVED CAREER PLANNING AND JOB  
SATISFACTION IN MALAYSIAN ARMED FORCES:  
THE ROLE OF CAREER DEVELOPMENT AS A MEDIATOR**

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**ABSTRACT**

This study examines the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction of Armed Forces personnel in Malaysia. It determines the mediating effect of career development on the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction. This study was conducted because there is negligible attention given to the effects of career planning and career development on job satisfaction, mainly in the Malaysian Armed Forces context. The IBM Social Science Statistical Package (IBM SPSS) application was used in the data analysis using descriptive and inferential analysis. The outcomes displayed three

important findings: First, the significant relationship between career planning and job satisfaction. Second, the relationship between career development and job satisfaction was significant. Third, the result statistically confirms that the effect of career planning on job satisfaction is indirectly affected by career development in the organisational sample. Further, the study discusses the contributions and recommendations based on the significant findings. In conclusion, the career planning among Malaysian Armed Forces personnel should be explained and aligned with their career development since it will affect their job satisfaction and increase their work performance in national defence and security.

**Keywords:** Career planning, career development, job satisfaction, work performance, Malaysian armed forces.

## INTRODUCTION

A career is a lifelong progression and learning process that encourages employee development. Career and employment contrasts sharply. A career is a succession of connected work opportunities, whereas a job is performed to earn an income. A career, in comparison, offers learning and experience for a lifetime, whereas a job is transient and has little bearing on one's future working life. (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). On the other hand, career development options include employee satisfaction in career planning or job satisfaction, increasing professional skills and obtaining appropriate rewards at work (Weng & McElroy, 2012).

Furthermore, today's employees concentrate not only on monetary returns but also if their psychological needs are met at the workplace (Jia-jun & Hua-ming, 2022). Even though individuals are tenacious and driven to meet their demands, they progress and feel satisfied when their psychological needs are addressed (Busque-Carrier et al., 2021). According to the Self-Determination Theory (SDT), scholars Deci et al. (2017) and also Ryan and Deci (2019) said that providing fundamental psychological needs is vital for self-motivation, well-being and job performance. The three essential requirements for employee psychological needs at the workplace include: autonomy, competence and relatedness (Martela & Riekkari, 2018). Thus, work

design or career planning may affect employee job satisfaction. When employees' psychological needs are fulfilled and job satisfaction is present, it will further impact their dedication to organisational commitment (Yulianingsih et al., 2021). Employee satisfaction at the job can be portrayed through their behaviour and attitude at the workplace. It is evident in their satisfaction, contentment and peacefulness when they accomplish routine tasks that impact the quality of their job, enhance productivity, and excellent service quality (Ianalisa et al., 2019). Employee and organisational career planning should be integrated to generate career trajectories and growth initiatives. Job satisfaction is supported by employee job experience and motivated employees, personal aims, career planning, and development support.

Job satisfaction is the psychological, physiological and environmental variables that generate fulfilment, pleasure and worth in an organisation. Successful career development and job satisfaction strategies can help employees and organisations adjust to a competitive business environment and meet a hopeful future (Martin III, 2022). Job satisfaction also plays a crucial role in determining military readiness and high job satisfaction can lessen job turnover and aid employee retention in the military (Bray, 2006). It contributes to the likelihood of a military officer staying active on duty, serving the military longer, or carrying out work assignments with passion. However, the symptoms of early retirement among armed forces personnel prove the existence of issues related to job dissatisfaction. This scenario is reinforced when many are observed hunting for other jobs outside the military to continue supporting their livelihoods - for example, by entering into a career in education (Noor Mokhzani et al., 2016).

Apart from that, the increase in transfer requests is also a sign of job dissatisfaction, as found in the study by Ianalisa et al. (2019) among police officers. Hence this study identifies job satisfaction evaluation among military personnel in Malaysian Military organisations. The study determines whether the Malaysian military perceives career planning and development as a key contributor to their dissatisfaction. It also provides information about the group of soldiers that derives the most job satisfaction in terms of their profiles. Most military service bodies have superior status and opportunities for career development to give job satisfaction. According to Unguryte-Ragauskiene and

Bileišis (2017), career among service members like the military is defined by linearity, continual employment and ranks, and that career development is arbitrary. Career development and career planning are primarily formalities in the military. For a country like the United States, Young et al. (2010) reported that attrition and retention among the U.S. Army Soldiers are taken seriously to help sustain a strong volunteer force.

Career planning involves making decisions contingent on individual characteristics and crucial external factors. In this situation, the decision-making process is influenced by employees' aims, personal traits and social interaction (Serbes & Albay, 2017). Organisations may improve employees' jobs and the whole process, attitude, behaviour and state of affairs in their work life through career planning. Career planning helps organisations to plan, coordinate, standardise, manage and oversee career planning (Sinha, 2020). However, the career plans and policies must specify the nature and purpose of career planning for different employees or personnel. It should also be based on a systematic assessment of career planning needs and the effectiveness of past programs. Systematic career planning is crucial for an individual's success and to help them have a positive attitude toward his/her work. Career planning benefits individuals and makes them responsible (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). It involves creating action steps to establish a planned alternative system suitable for employees and their career development. Yoon et al. (2021) debated that career development in organisations ensures a fit between individual and organisational demands while improving employee influence over their career situations. The planning must include employees, organisational factors and support systems, including top management and supervisors. Employees, organisations and manager share the responsibility for career development. There are strong links between career planning and career development in all careers, including the military.

Career development involves knowledge management, effort, independence and evolution to progress toward a desirable future. Moreover, promoting career development to achieve job satisfaction among employees is seen as the management's preparedness to create and administer career planning to build career pathways for employees. Such effort, as argued by Ismail et al. (2014), may contribute to increased job satisfaction in the organisation. Job

satisfaction is a favourable emotional condition at the workplace, whereas, as Faragher et al. (2005) argued, lower job satisfaction may affect employee productivity and organisational performance. Career development, therefore, is essential in all job categories. It entails using career planning and suitable policies that promote employee career development in an organisation. The organisation must emphasise the Career Development Plan (CDP) for all employees. It performs many crucial functions for organisations and aids employees in reaching their targets in their careers. It fosters professional and personal development by providing a structured plan and documented list of employees' short and long-term goals in the organisation (Bulilan, 2020). In addition to examining how employees might advance their careers and establish professional pathways, career planning and job satisfaction also consider how to keep employees satisfied at the workplace. Human resource management that prioritises the employee career planning and job satisfaction may improve the organisational performance since it significantly impacts the whole organisational effectiveness (Fahed-Sreih, 2020).

When army officers do not have proper career development and career planning during service, it contributes to them retiring earlier in their career even though they may be at a productive age. For example, a source from the Department of Records and Pension, Ministry of Defence (MINDEF) revealed that most of the seconded military officers who are lecturers at public universities prefer to retire before time, shift to become civilian staff and retain as permanent lecturers. This is because of brighter opportunities and potentials for their career planning and advancement and rewards given as academic staff (civilian) compared to a limited senior position available for their higher career path if they continue serving the military. Another practical issue is discrimination in the military service promotion, which portrays improper career planning and development implementations. This issue was revealed by Sukiman (2011), who argued that discrimination affects discipline violations due to job dissatisfaction among army personnel. Discrimination in military career growth is strengthened when it becomes a factor for non-Malays not to be interested in joining the armed forces (Ramasamy, 2021). Another possible issue is the low qualifications that do not meet the requirement to enhance career development, especially among Non-Commissioned Officers (NCOs), which has caused a restraint for them to climb their career ladder. Although

MINDEF offers assistance, including further education opportunities to help with long-term careers, these openings are limited because of financial restraints (Zahratulhayat, 2022). As a result, the NCOs face depression, anxiety and unsatisfactory feeling, which causes them to struggle with life, especially after retirement.

Reviewing past studies in the area of employee career, the researchers found that career planning, career development and job satisfaction are some things that are not affected by each other. However, they have an association with each other. This has been proven by several studies (Puah & Ananthram, 2006; Tan & Yahya, 2008; Ismail et al., 2011), which revealed that well-planned career planning would improve career development in the organisation and subsequently affect the employees' job satisfaction. Negligible attention has been given to these associations, mainly the impact of career development in handling the workplace; even some studies have examined some of the variables' relationships (Ismail et al., 2011; Jepsen & Dickson, 2003). Moreover, little is known about the impact of career development in mediating the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction from the Malaysian Armed Forces perspective. In this context, the job satisfaction is defined as the employee's overall behaviour that relates to his/her job through feelings, beliefs and attitude (Obiekwe et al., 2019; Rosli & Ab. Wahab, 2013).

The literature on career planning revealed that many researchers had preferred to investigate a simple correlation and regression tests between the career dimensions and employee outcomes by neglecting the role of career development in developing an organisational career framework (Ismail et al., 2011; Puah & Ananthram, 2006). Therefore, those studies had not completely discussed the implications and contributions of their studies for benefiting the management to know about the uniqueness of the holistic career model and setting the career strategies for organisational career program success (Adeloka, 2011). To identify this gap, the researchers decided to conduct a study to investigate the relationships and impacts between career planning, career development and job satisfaction. Therefore, the first purpose of this research is to examine how career planning affects job satisfaction. Second, to assess how career development affects job satisfaction. Thirdly, to assess how career development functions as a mediator in the correlation between job satisfaction and career planning.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### **The Concept of Job Satisfaction, Career Planning and Career Development**

#### ***Job Satisfaction***

Job satisfaction is a positive or pleasant emotional state that results from an overall assessment of one's employment or job experience (Locke, 1976). Therefore, job satisfaction will influence employees, employers, compensation, and the work environment (Idris et al., 2020). When employees have job satisfaction, it will build a pathway to heighten their career development and planning. Furthermore, such endeavour increases the prospect of organisational effectiveness and success. According to Landy and Conte (2004), job satisfaction is the behaviour or positive emotional state assessment of the impact of a work experience. Ahmadi and Alireza (2007) argued that job satisfaction is about achieving a predetermined level at work. The emotional reaction to the job can be termed job satisfaction (Oktem et al., 2020). It helps develop a sound environment that promotes many employee participation (Baqir et al., 2020). Today, the business world is challenging, complex competitive and the success of any business organisations is contributed by satisfied employees (Shuvro et al., 2020). On another note, Reis and Pena (2001) discovered that it is difficult to train a person. Organisations experience problems replacing existing employees due to the complexity of replacing an existing talent. Organisations should retain existing talents through employee motivation. Job satisfaction should be a continuous process to include other facets of job satisfaction that arise due to the changing environment. Workers with high job satisfaction tend to work hard (Ismail et al., 2014).

Many researchers accept the definition of job satisfaction as a positive feeling about a job. If employees' expectations are met, they will experience a feeling of accomplishment that determines the degree of satisfaction. According to Rue and Byars (2003), job satisfaction is made up of five components. They include attitudes towards colleagues, general working conditions, financial benefits and attitudes towards manager supervision. Job satisfaction is achieved when set targets are met. This influences employees' commitment and performance. The output of each employee can be evaluated through

this. A high level of job satisfaction may result from a considerable degree of achieved expectations.

### ***Career Planning***

Considering possibilities and limitations in the workplace and career-related goals that include direction, timing and actions is the process of career planning (Puah & Ananthram, 2006). Making a person aware of their abilities, interests, values, opportunities, restrictions, options and outcomes is how Hall (1986) describes career planning. According to this definition, career planning is a process for gaining personal control over the profession of choice. When people plan their careers, they assess their skills and limitations, create professional routes and plan to further their careers.

Career planning involves creating action steps to establish a system of individual work in a firm in a planned alternative. Career planning benefits individuals and makes them responsible (Mathis & Jackson, 2011). Individuals are responsible for planning their careers while organisations develop and cultivate these careers. Organisations develop and cultivate careers through planning and management. According to the “theory of organisational equilibrium”, an employee will remain with an organisation as long as the inducements (such as income, working conditions and career development opportunities) are equal to or higher than the contributions (time, effort) demanded of the employee (Allen, 2008). In this case, the author is talking about job satisfaction.

However, some organisations may have challenges in managing employee career planning effectively. Such challenge exists especially among military reservists’ who have had long extended leave from civilian employment. Sweet and Black (2021) argued that the military reservists’ take the most prolonged leave from civilian employment. Due to this, Human Resource Development (HRD) and organisation management have little direction in the career development and career planning of military reservists.

### ***Career Development***

Wolfe and Kolb (1980) provided a concept of career development that still holds up today and encompasses a person’s entire life, not just their



work. Career development concerns the full person and the always-shifting surroundings of individuals. Understanding the structure of circumstances, obligations to individuals and environmental demands and limits is necessary. In this sense, personal and professional growth come together to form a union. The interactions between an individual and their surroundings, which are continuously changing, assist in keeping the emphasis on professional progress.

Career development is vital in organisations and academic institutions and crucial in large-scale organisations with dynamic cultures. Therefore, a career is a significant factor in preparing for a working environment. As debated by Yoon et al. (2021), career development in organisations ensures a fit between individual and organisational demands while improving employee influence over their career situations.

Organisational managers and stakeholders may design, organise, formalise, lead and monitor career programmes attributable to the career development plans. The right employees will be available to meet the organisation's personnel needs, owing to career development. Career development is required to align employees' aims and desires with career opportunities. Managing a person's professional development is a part of career development (Gyansah & Guantai, 2018). A career is broken down into phases and each level poses certain obstacles or challenges for the individual to attain (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2006). Therefore, it is reasonable to assume that as people develop in their careers, they will all run across various issues. This will undoubtedly cause various people to have different opinions on progressing in their careers.

## **HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT**

### **The Relationship between Career Planning and Job Satisfaction**

Researchers like Chen et al. (2004) examined a group of 367 employees from the Hsinchu Science-based Industrial Park in North Taiwan who worked in research and development. According to the study, the management's capacity to plan career advancement enhances career chances, which could increase workplace job satisfaction. Puah and Ananthram's (2006) research was also done in Singapore on 505

staff members of a prestigious international hotel. The results of this study demonstrated that better job satisfaction was directly related to management's capacity to plan the development of employees' careers. Those findings have been proven by Salleh et al. (2020). They mentioned that the employees seek to plan their careers in ways that significantly assist them in developing and progressing, affecting their career satisfaction level.

Silva et al. (2010) found that the capacity of management to plan the advancement of employees' careers had significantly improved their career prospects among 170 employees employed by three retail enterprises in Lebanon. Consequently, it could result in organisations having higher job satisfaction among employees. In a study by Chavadi et al. (2022), the authors argued that job satisfaction partly influenced job mismatch and turnover intentions. A job mismatch can be partly due to a lack of career planning, affecting organisational behaviours (specifically human resource management practices). Therefore, promoting the employee career planning will boost job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is the feeling a person experiences following a performance management evaluation and work experience, and it is the employee's favourable response to various job aspects. According to Basu Mallick (2021), it is employees' satisfaction with their work and presence in the organisation. This covers their interactions with coworkers and superiors, how they feel about the organisation's policies, and how their job affects their personal lives and normal duties. Most businesses regularly conduct job satisfaction surveys and top organisations are working harder than ever to put this experience into numbers. Consequently, there is a positive relationship between career planning and job satisfaction. It brought the researchers to the first hypothesis in this study which is:

H<sub>1</sub>: Career planning has a significant effect on job satisfaction.

### **The Relationship between Career Development and Job Satisfaction**

Organisation managers and stakeholders may design, coordinate, regulate, guide and supervise a profession through career development programmes. Workplace employees, including managers and coworkers, pay and the work environment all impact job satisfaction

(Sinha, 2020). As debated by Pearson and Ananthram (2008), the issue of career is a significant challenge for most organisations. Organisations that do not adequately look for a satisfactory solution to labour market issues are likely to continue to struggle. Multinational corporations, for example, suffer when their international endeavours are unsuccessful and the expatriates return sooner than anticipated. Additionally, when the retention rates of these “valued” management groups are lost owing to subpar retention strategies, these organisations incur direct and indirect expenses. There is little question that the management cadres’ “journey” and “final aim” are not in the proper order, which contributes to the poor career progression of expatriates.

Researchers Nava-Macali et al. (2019) conducted descriptive-correlational research where the primary goal was to assess the influence of a career development programme on the job satisfaction and retention of 35 non-teaching staff members in a university. The research found that employees are content with their jobs and achieve job satisfaction when they have the chance to learn and advance within the company, which results from the career development. Employees are inclined to remain with the organisation due to the favourable prospects for advancement and career development. The higher the job satisfaction, the more the staff member agrees with the factors affecting employee retention. The more effective their organisational career development programme, the more effective the perceived effect of the company’s development programme; hence the more satisfied they would be in their training and development.

The corporate environment is increasingly competitive; thus, employees are more career-minded. Saira et al. (2013) examined the relationship between career development and job satisfaction in five private banks in Karachi. The researchers employed a structured questionnaire and sent that to 500 respondents. The findings revealed that the career development and job satisfaction were significantly correlated. Organisations’ career development programmes contribute to the employee job satisfaction. The practical implications of the study help managers construct career development programmes that boost job satisfaction and foster a positive work environment. Mohyi (2019) examined career development, work environment and employee job satisfaction and analysed how they affect job satisfaction. The research examined 74 Sengkaling Recreational Park

employees, 50 percent of the population. The results revealed that job satisfaction, career development and the work environment correlated significantly. The regression analysis research demonstrated that the career development and work environment affect employee job satisfaction. The research suggested that organisations should pay more attention to the employee career development by actively networking and offering guidance regarding career requirements in each division.

Adelina (2010) studied S.C. OMV – Petroleum Branch employees. Findings from this study showed that management’s capabilities to organise career progression increased their career development. Ray et al. (2010) researched 122 auditors from the largest organisations in Taiwan. According to the survey, the top managers’ capacity to plan and manage career advancement significantly accelerated their professional growth. As a result, the organisation could experience more job satisfaction. This finding has been emphasised again in the recent study that job satisfaction can be promoted when employees are comfortable with their extrinsic job features. Such extrinsic job features may include organisational policy and supervisor role in career planning, whereas intrinsic job features may include advancement and growth related to career development (Ismail et al., 2021). Therefore, previous studies show that there are significant relations between career development and job satisfaction among employees that were studied. This caused the researchers to develop the second hypothesis, which is:

H<sub>2</sub>: Career development has a significant impact on the job satisfaction.

### **The Relationship between Career Planning, Career Development and Job Satisfaction**

The notion of preparing employee career planning through Human Resource Management (HRM) policies and methodologies to build specific skills, attitudes and expertise for organisations is gaining recognition. In a study by Saleem et al. (2013), the researchers aimed to determine the benefits of professional development programmes on organisations and employees. The study collected data from five main private banks in Islamabad and found that organisations prioritising employee career development contribute to lower retention and higher

job satisfaction. In addition, career planning and career development are significantly linked to job satisfaction and employee devotion to the organisation.

In another study by Nava-Macali et al. (2019), the researchers investigated the effects of a career development programme on the job satisfaction and retention of 35 non-teaching employees at UPHL. According to the research, career coaching and mentorship help employees collaborate more effectively. Guidance and counselling assisted in explaining their ambitions and how they would contribute to the organisation's overall aims and objectives. HRM handles the Career Development Programme (CDP). Job rotation increases employees' career planning and organising abilities and career planning is an important aspect of the employee career development. It aligns with the professional progression. The survey found that employees are content with their jobs since they can learn and develop with the organisation. They are also inclined to remain with the organisation because of the strong possibilities for career progression. The more successful the organisation's development programme, the more satisfied employees are.

Ismail et al. (2015) also argued that career development needs to be supported by a comprehensive career planning dimension to influence career satisfaction among Malaysian military personnel. This study involved 200 military staff who serve at a military-based tertiary educational institution in Malaysia.

According to Santoso and Sidik (2019), human resource career development has become vital in all organisations to improve employee job satisfaction and organisational success. Employers should focus on the careers of their employees to increase employee job satisfaction. An encouraging work environment that is backed by solid work ethics will contribute to greater job satisfaction. The researchers emphasised that career development factors impact job satisfaction and that if an organisation wants to boost employee happiness and job satisfaction at the workplace, it should promote career opportunities, improve work habits and foster a positive workplace culture.

Although many studies found that career planning, career development and job satisfaction are significantly correlated, some studies reveal

differing results. Mengesha and Zewude's (2021) primary goal was to investigate the impact of career management techniques on Jimma City's public workers' job satisfaction using career development as the mediating variable. Approximately, two hundred twenty-four employees from a public institution in Jimma City were surveyed to gather the primary data. The results showed that the career management components, including succession planning, career policy and career planning, have little to no impact on how satisfied employees are with their jobs and that the career development had no mediated impact.

Those empirical studies could hardly be supported by a famous motivation theory such as Herzberg Motivator-Hygiene Theory (Norlida et al., 2018). This theory emphasises that recognition, achievement, the opportunity for progress, development, obligation and job are crucial determinants that promote individual satisfaction. Coupled with the organisational career development working model by Hall (1986), career planning and management are important factors for enhancing an individual's job satisfaction and impacting significant career outcomes. Every individual's career planning is a process toward career achievement, growth and advancement (Ismail et al., 2015). Indirectly, career planning is considered a catalyst for individuals' career development that motivates employees and generates job satisfaction. Gokse et al. (2019) stated that job satisfaction is mainly predicted by career opportunities from career planning and realised in the career development.

This research aims to ascertain the association between job satisfaction and career planning and the influence of career development for employees as a mediator. Manomani (2021) studied the Thanjavur District private sector banks on this issue. A survey was carried out using a structured questionnaire sent to 500 respondents and administered through the email. The Structural Equation Model (SEM) through AMOS was used to evaluate the hypotheses. Approximately three hundred fifty respondents were involved in the study, and the convenience sampling was utilised. According to the research, there was a positive correlation between career planning, career growth and employee job satisfaction. Activities for career planning and development that employers provide were well-liked by the employees. It is noted that employees have recently become more aware of career development as the corporate sector has become

increasingly competitive. Thus, the above-supported theories and past research revealed significant relationships between career planning, career development and job satisfaction in the organisations studied. It leads the researchers to develop the third hypothesis, which is:

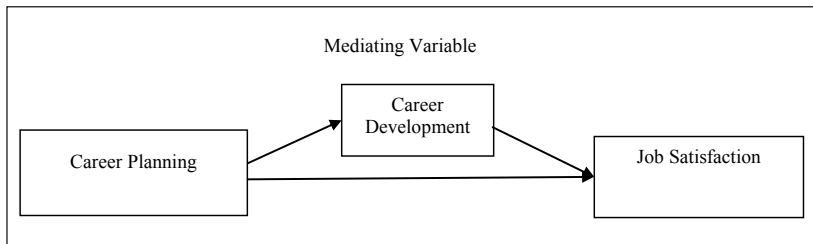
H<sub>3</sub>: Career development mediates the effect of career planning on the job satisfaction.

### **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework for this study is shown in Figure 1 and is based on the literature review. Career development, job satisfaction and career planning have the tangential link. This study suggests that the professional growth will link the career planning and job satisfaction, as presented in Figure 1.

**Figure 1**

*Conceptual Framework of the Relationship between Career Planning, Career Development and Job Satisfaction*



From the workers' perspective, career planning is essential for an individual's career path. Management and planning have direct effects on the development frequency. A well-coordinated career in drawing appropriate plans and managing the careers to follow the predetermined plan will result in the career growth and development. The frequency of career growth can be increased by adopting up-to-date management styles. Achieving set objectives leads to job satisfaction and career development is directly related to the job satisfaction. The achievement of predetermined career activities motivates an employee to continue working in an organisation for a long time.

## METHODOLOGY

### Research Design

The researchers conducted a quantitative study through the questionnaire survey form to collect data. Using the cross-sectional research design, the questionnaires were distributed to the respondents to gather accurate and unbiased data vital for the study (Creswell, 2014). The individual was the unit of analysis. This study was conducted at the Malaysian Military Organisations that covered three services of the Malaysian Armed Forces: The Army, Navy and Air Force. The researchers designed a set of questionnaires that were distributed to the respondents at the selected bases/camps in Malaysia. The questionnaire was structured to have the informants' demographic profiles and items on each variable from the career management and job satisfaction literature.

### Measurement

There are three main parts of the survey questionnaire; (i) The Career Planning was measured based on 11 items adapted from the scale developed by Appelbaum and Shapiro (2002). (ii) The second construct was career development, measured by 11 items adopted from Zulkiflee (2005). Finally, (iii) this study measured 14 job satisfaction items adopted by Schriesheim and Tsui (1980), who had developed a valid scale. Some of the items used to measure the constructs are illustrated in Table 1.

**Table 1**

*Sample Items for the Constructs Understudy*

Construct	Items
Career Planning	"I am confident with my work capability", "My task field is suitable with my qualification", "I have good academic background".
Career Development	"This career is my choice", "I have strong interest to this career", "I have clear understanding on my career path".
Job Satisfaction	"I have great satisfaction in my job", "I am satisfied with the rewards given by my employer", "I intend to retain in this career".



A Likert scale, from “strongly disagree/dissatisfied” (1) to “strongly agree/satisfied” (5), was used to measure the constructs. Application of the Likert scale would yield scale sensitivity (Cummins & Gullone, 2000), an accurate measure of the respondent’s true evaluation (Finstad, 2010) and acceptable reliability and validity (Alwin, 1997). Interestingly, the confirmatory factor analysis of the study proved that the best fit was achieved by using multiple points from the Likert scale (Oylum & Arslan, 2016).

### **Sampling Technique**

The target population for this study was the personnel from Malaysian Military Organisations. As of 2019, 136,000 Malaysian military personnel have slightly increased from 133,600 in 2011 (MACROTRENDS, 2022). However, a portion of the Malaysian military population are officers and this study focuses on the military officers with ranks. The study drew a sample of 1,500 soldiers from 12,000 military officers. Stratified random sampling was used in the study. The population was stratified into groups. In this research, the groups were categorised into various job categories: The Army, Navy and Air Force. The researcher then randomly selected a sample from each category or group. There were 900 officers from the Army because the numbers of Army officers are greater than those of other Military divisions. The Navy and the Air Force had samples of 300 members each. This stratification and careful sample allocation were vital tools for the study.

The stratified sampling aims to get a sample representative of the population for each feasible sample that can be selected. Pure random selection cannot achieve the objective. Compared to not using stratification, the sampling variances from the stratification samples are lower. Out of the total of 1500 distributed questionnaires, 950 questionnaires were collected, which makes a return rate of 63.33 percent. In studies, a sample size of 30 percent of the population is sufficient (Yahya, 2007). The rates of return for each service exceeded 30 percent. The research then removed invalid questionnaires and this is because there were incomplete responses. After the subtraction, 836 questionnaires remained which were then analysed.

## RESULTS

### Descriptive Analysis of the Demographic Profile

The demographic data of 836 respondents of the Army, Navy and Air Force officers who participated in the research are represented in Table 2.

**Table 2**

#### *Demographic Profile of the Respondents*

Demographic Profile	Sub-Profile	Num. (Percentage -%)
Gender	Male	715 (85.5%)
	Female	121 (14.5%)
Age	Below 25	242 (28.9%)
	26-30 years old	284 (34.0%)
	31-35 years old	128 (15.3%)
	36-40 years old	85 (10.2%)
	41 above	97 (11.7%)
Hometown	Selangor	67 (8.0%)
	Johor	99 (11.8%)
	Sabah	16 (1.9%)
	Sarawak	10 (1.2%)
	Perak	130 (15.5%)
	Kedah	92 (11.0%)
	Kelantan	92 (11.0%)
	Kuala Lumpur	89 (10.7%)
	Pahang	46 (5.5%)
	Pulau Pinang	40 (4.8%)
	Terengganu	21 (2.5%)
	Negeri Sembilan	54 (6.4%)
Race	Melaka	72 (8.6%)
	Perlis	8 (0.9%)
	Malay	777 (92.9%)
	Chinese	13 (1.6%)
	Indian	17 (2.0%)
Religion	Others	34 (4.1%)
	Muslim	777 (92.9%)
	Christian	21 (2.5%)

(continued)

Demographic Profile	Sub-Profile	Num. (Percentage -%)
Marital status	Buddha	12 (1.4%)
	Hindu	14 (1.7%)
	Others	12 (1.4%)
	Single	317 (37.9%)
	Married	510 (61.0%)
With whom do you stay?	Widowed/widower	9 (1.1%)
	Alone	198 (23.7%)
	Wife/husband/children	447 (53.4%)
	Friend	57 (6.7%)
	Mess	110 (13.2%)
No. of children	Parents/siblings	24 (2.9%)
	1	248 (29.7%)
	2	227 (27.2%)
	3	166 (19.8%)
	4	98 (11.8%)
	5	67 (8.1%)
	6	18 (2.1%)
	7	6 (0.7%)
	8	2 (0.2%)
	9	4 (0.5%)
Do you have children with disabilities?	Yes	22 (2.6%)
	No	814 (97.4%)
Ranking in ARMY	Second Lieutenant	10 (1.2%)
	Lieutenant	65 (7.8%)
	Captain	609 (72.9%)
	Major	130 (15.6%)
	Lt Colonel	20 (2.4%)
	Colonel	2 (0.2%)
Ranking in RMN	Second Lieutenant	82 (9.8%)
	Lt Dya	57 (6.9%)
	Lieutenant	456 (54.5%)
	Lt Commander	192 (23.0%)
	Commander	45 (5.4%)
Ranking in RMAF	Captain	4 (0.5%)
	Second Lieutenant	0 (0.0%)
	Lieutenant	58 (6.9%)
	Captain	577 (69.0%)
	Major	154 (18.4)
	Lt Colonel	38 (4.6%)
	Colonel	9 (1.1%)

continued

Demographic Profile	Sub-Profile	Num. (Percentage -%)
Income	Less than RM1000	67 (8.0%)
	RM1000-RM1999	261 (31.2%)
	RM2000-RM2999	319 (38.1%)
	RM3000-RM3999	95 (11.4%)
	RM4000 and above	94 (11.3%)
Is it enough?	Yes	326 (39.0%)
	No	307 (36.7%)
	Ok	203 (24.3%)
No. of dependent (children)	1	245 (29.3%)
	2	226 (27.0%)
	3	169 (20.2%)
	4	103 (12.3%)
	5	68 (8.1%)
	6	16 (1.9%)
	7	5 (0.7%)
	8	2 (0.2%)
	9	2 (0.2%)
No. of dependent (family member)	1	165 (19.7%)
	2	313 (37.4%)
	3	104 (12.4%)
	4	74 (8.9%)
	5	53 (6.3%)
	6	44 (5.3%)
	7	31 (3.7%)
	8	33 (3.9%)
	9	4 (0.5%)
	10	13 (1.6%)
Year of joining ARMY, RMN or RMAF	1971 – 1980	11 (1.4%)
	1981 – 1990	78 (9.3%)
	1991 – 2000	211 (25.2%)
	2001 and above	536 (64.1%)
Reason for joining military	Interest in the military	443
	Encouragement from the family	205
	Career change	39
	Career guarantee	345
	Better salary structure	106
	Future guarantee	298
	No other choice	57

The respondents' gender, age, hometown, race, religion, marital status, whom they were staying with, number of children, number of children with disabilities, rank and unit in the Army, RMN, or RMAF, income, number of dependents, year of joining the Army, RMN, or RMAF and the reason for joining the Army, RMN and RMAF are all shown in Table 2. The findings show that most of the respondents were male (85.5%), aged from 26 to 30 (30%) and (15.5%) of them came from Perak. Most of the respondents were Malays (92.9%) and Muslims (92.9), and the majority (61%) of them were married. Most respondents also stayed with their wives or husband and children (53.4%) compared to those who stayed at the mess (a place where military soldiers are allowed to congregate, eat and in certain situations, reside) (13.2%). Only 2.6 percent of the respondents had a child or children with disabilities. Some disabilities recorded include Brachmann De Lange Syndrome, Partial Spastic, Takypause and studying and hearing problems.

From the results of descriptive statistics, most of the respondents were Captain (75.5%) in the Army rank, Lieutenant (54.5%) in RMN rank and Captain (69%) in RMAF rank with their income between RM2000 to RM2999 (38.1%). Most respondents said their income was enough (39%). The number of dependent/s for most respondents is one child (29.3%) and two family members (37.4%). Most of the respondents joined their military career from 2001 until 2011 (64.1%). Besides that, respondents were asked a question about their reason for joining the military. Most of them joined the military because of their interest in it, with 443 respondents.

### **Reliability Analysis**

On the basis of the findings of the factor analysis, a reliability test was subsequently performed. A reliability test was conducted by calculating each variable's alpha values. Sekaran and Bougie (2017) indicate that dependability of 0.60 is the lowest acceptable value. Table 3 provides a summary of Cronbach's alpha reliability. Cronbach's alpha for career planning, career development and job satisfaction varied from 0.859 to 0.925, as indicated in Table 3 above. As recommended by Sekaran and Bougie (2020), this implies that all alpha values are more than the minimally acceptable dependability. According to the reliability studies on the variables, every measurement was accurate and internally consistent.

**Table 3**

*Results of Reliability Analyses*

Variables	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Career Planning	11	0.873
Career Development	11	0.898
Job Satisfaction	14	0.932

**Pearson Correlation Analysis**

To develop the fundamental concepts for investigating the pattern of the inter-correlations of the study variables, the Pearson Correlation Analysis was conducted. One of the conditions of the multiple regression analysis performed can be achieved this way. Pallant (2016) states that to conduct a multiple regression analysis ( $r$ ), the independent variables must at least somewhat correlate (ideally over 0.30) with the dependent variables. With the help of the correlation coefficient, this level may be calculated. The outcomes of the Pearson Correlation Analysis are shown in Table 4.

**Table 4**

*Correlation Results for Study Variables*

	Career Planning	Career Development	Job Satisfaction
Career planning	1	0.632**	0.607**
Career development		1	0.811**
Job satisfaction			1

According to Table 4 ( $r = 0.632$ ,  $p 0.01$ ), there is a strong association between career planning and career development. This indicates a positive correlation between the mediating variable and both independent variables. With a strong correlation of  $r = 0.811$  ( $p 0.01$ ) between career development and job satisfaction, it can be concluded that there is a positive relationship between the mediating variable and the dependent variable. Career planning positively correlates with job satisfaction when the association between the independent and

dependent variables is examined ( $r = 0.607$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ). We may conclude that career planning, an independent variable, is positively connected with job satisfaction. The value is more than the 0.30 threshold Pallant (2016) given. Because every test of an independent variable in this study reveals a connection to the dependent variable, a multiple regression analysis may be performed.

### **Multiple Regression Analysis of Variables**

Table 5 demonstrates a substantial and positive correlation between career planning and the job satisfaction measure (significant at 0.01). This finding indicates that Hypothesis 1 is correct. Career planning and career development are substantially associated at the 0.01 level, according to the regression analysis of career planning (predictor) and career development (mediator). The findings also indicate that, at the 0.01 level, the relationship between career growth (the mediator) and job satisfaction (the criteria) is significant. This outcome indirectly supports Hypothesis 2.

**Table 5**

#### *Hypotheses Testing Results*

Hypotheses	Beta	t-value	Decision
H <sub>1</sub> : Career planning has a significant effect on job satisfaction	0.722	22.037	Accepted
H <sub>2</sub> : Career development has a significant impact on job satisfaction	0.759	27.754	Accepted
H <sub>3</sub> : Career development mediates the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction (Effect of career planning on job satisfaction after mediated by career development)	0.188	6.172	Accepted with partial mediation

*Notes:* \*\*. Significant at the 0.01 level

Additionally, statistically significant is the relationship between regulating career development (mediator) and career planning (predictor) on job satisfaction (criterion). The study demonstrates that the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction is

mediated by career development. Therefore, given partial mediation, Hypothesis H<sub>3</sub> is supported. This is because the predictor's beta value only considerably decreases from its initial direct influence on the criterion variable, 0.722, to 0.188. (Hair et al., 2018). There is a possibility that career development might account for the link between military officers' work satisfaction and career planning in military organisations. According to this poll, military personnel who properly plan their careers report higher work satisfaction and steady career advancement.

## **DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

The career planning variable played a significant role in determining job satisfaction, even in the military. This is because the culture in the military prioritises planning and discipline when deciding on any activities. When the organisation practice career planning that is clear and concise, it will be the foundation for servicemen to be satisfied with their careers. For example, a specific organisation like PERHEBAT serves the military and functions to help take care of the armed forces, even developing a plan for them after retirement to ensure a smooth transition as a civilian. This study is also supported by past research by Chen et al. (2004), Chavadi et al. (2022) and Silva et al. (2010).

Career development also showed significance in the relationship with job satisfaction. This means that the respondents perceived that the military organisation had supplied the facilities to attend training programmes to assist in their careers during service and after retirement. Some of the training institutions do serve a part in the career development of servicemen, such as the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College (MAFCS), Malaysian Armed Forces Defence College (MAFDC), Malaysian Armed Forces Islamic Training (MAFIT), National Resilience College (NRC), PERHEBAT and recently (Recognition of Prior Experiential Learning (RPEL)). The results are also reinforced by past research by Mohyi (2019), Nava-Macali et al. (2019) and Sinha (2020).

This study reveals that the career development has mediated the influence of career planning on job satisfaction. Employee satisfaction creates a sense of contentment for employees at the workplace and satisfaction permits employees to operate in a satisfying fashion



that promotes improved execution. It was found from this study that career planning and job satisfaction have a significant relationship, and employees with robust career planning will normally have high job satisfaction. In addition, career planning plays a significant role in predicting job satisfaction. On the other hand, the research established that career development was a partial mediating variable between career planning and job satisfaction among Malaysian military officers. Eight hundred and thirty-six respondents claimed they would have immense job satisfaction when their leaders properly planned their careers and exercised career development programmes.

The study's implications are based on the theoretical support, the robustness of the research methodology and the contribution to practitioners. For the theoretical support, the findings aligned with Herzberg's Motivator-Hygiene Theory and Hall's (1986) organisational career development working model. It was revealed that career planning, management and opportunity for career growth are important determinants for promoting an individual's job satisfaction leading to significant career outcomes. This study's findings have also supported the career management-based literature. Rothwell et al. (2005) found that leadership and career development added value to the organisation and foster employee satisfaction. If the employees supposedly failed to equip themselves with the current trends required by the leaders, like skills and knowledge, their career development, such as slow promotion and tardy salary increments, may be negatively affected. Such situation will make the employees dissatisfied with their careers (Tan & Yahya, 2008). This scenario paralleled with Tobing's (2016) claim that accentuated the value of career development in leading to job satisfaction by ensuring that a career needs strong planning at the preliminary phase. The result of this study has also broadened studies and proven the findings of Chen et al. (2004), Puah and Ananthram (2006) and also Salleh et al. (2020). Considering the robustness of the research methodology, the survey questionnaire provided in this study, with the availability of robust collected data, adequately met the requirements of validity and reliability analyses, thus yielding accurate and reliable research findings.

In terms of practical applications, the study's findings offer suggestions for career programmes, particularly those that focus on career planning, career development and job satisfaction. The following factors should be considered for future research and the

Ministry of Defence. To improve the consistency of the findings, future researchers can broaden the study to include other ranks from the services. The study also recommends strategies for improving employee careers in the Malaysian Ministry of Defence. Such strategies include the assurance of job satisfaction for military officers. This is because when the military officers are satisfied with their jobs, they will perform their duties well. The authorities should ensure that the service members' relationships among military officers are healthy to enhance commitment to their duties. Military officers should also get first-rate pay and benefits to motivate them as they perform their duties. To boost morale, authorities should also ensure healthy communication between military officers and their seniors and performance recognition. The Ministry of Defence and other authorities in Malaysia should develop a frequent employee survey programme. The programme may be an attitude survey focusing on the military officers' feelings and beliefs about their jobs and work organisations. Authorities will have to take responsive actions to enhance job satisfaction among military officers. Such effort will encourage the military officers to consider their authorities responsive to their well-being and needs for a good working environment and view them positively.

The study proposes an employee career model suitable for the Malaysian Public Administration Sector. To fulfil its obligations in terms of career development initiatives is to encourage the circumstances and foster an environment that supports the professional development of its troops. To encourage the circumstances and foster an atmosphere that will support the employee career growth, particularly in the Armed Forces, the Malaysian Armed Forces (MAF) should be a proactive force in the career development process. They must spend adequate time and energy on the job design and equipment. Malaysia's military organisations should develop efficient and tactical use of performance management. This will provide a means of recognising excellent performance among military officers, and the authorities will be able to clarify tasks and support the officers in achieving these goals. The course may offer organised approaches to managing military officers, teams and departments in pursuing and accomplishing organisational goals. It is an effective strategy for locating high potentials and assisting them in succeeding through management development and highlighting training and skills shortfalls also aids in planning human resources. This study suggests that military organisations should hold review sessions with

military officers, which will set out an opportunity to discuss personal and career development issues. The effort is extremely beneficial because it shows how officers are valued in military organisations in Malaysia. The military organisations and the senior officers should ensure that they play an influential role in a military officer's career development. They should provide developmental assignments to the military officers with constructive and timely feedback about their performance. The proactive measure will further enhance job satisfaction among military personnel.

The military authorities should offer economic support in tuition compensation to the military officers to gain current knowledge about their careers. For instance, they may provide time for employees to learn by giving them time off from work for off-the-job training and development. The study also recommends that the senior management of the Malaysian military organisation practise coaching and mentoring. Coaching will involve setting a favourable environment, actively listening to the employee, asking questions and providing useful feedback (Randhawa, 2007). Mentoring will involve senior military officers counselling, listening to feelings and stimulating employees through ideas and information. It is a development-oriented relationship between the senior and junior officers that involve giving advice, sharing interactions and giving wide-ranging hold-up. Informal mentoring will be effective as it will lead to openness. Finally, the study recommends that the military officers in Malaysia should control their career growth. They should play active roles as team members and update their current knowledge, skills and abilities.

## **CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS, AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

The study achieved its main objectives. The findings proved that career development mediates the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction. The study suggests that the organisations and the Malaysian Ministry of Defence should prepare extra courses regarding their officers' careers. This will enable them to have an effective career planning program. Military officers are likely to feel satisfied with their jobs when there is equity in career development opportunities. Authorities within the military organisations in Malaysia need to motivate military officers. When Military officers are satisfied with

their job, they will have a higher dedication and morality. This will lead to better performance in their jobs and loyalty. It will result in a superior image of the Malaysian military organisation. The soldiers will consider their career in the Malaysia Armed Forces (MAF) a distinguished career among the public service sector in Malaysia. So, therefore, job satisfaction is the key motivation for job performance. Senior officers in the military organisations of Malaysia should ensure that officers are satisfied with their job for an excellent performance of their duties.

The Malaysia Armed Forces (MAF) may have to hold review sessions with military officers. This will set out an opportunity to discuss personal and career development issues. Such approach is beneficial because it shows how officers are valued in military organisations in Malaysia. The military organisations and the senior officers should ensure that they play an influential role in a military officer's career development. Providing developmental assignments to military officers and providing them with constructive and timely performance feedback is vital.

There are several limitations in conducting this study on the military. By highlighting patterns and attitudes, for example, the questionnaires reveal predicted results, but they may omit to elaborate on the underlying causes of the conclusion. The use of predetermined questionnaires may have driven respondents to provide information that they may not have known or may have understood differently based on their perceptions. This indicates that it could have implied a general understanding of the subject studied. Because a questionnaire did not account for this, the result could have been slightly skewed. The study also had geographical limitations. The target responders could not be located in a single location. The researcher had to visit the various military commanders' camps to get reliable data. The adequate creation of measurement tools was another facet of this research's time restriction. Before starting the actual study, the researchers had to put all of their data collection methods to the test. A pre-test is the first use of data collection methods to judge their suitability (Monette et al., 2011). Before submitting the results, the researcher had to ensure that the raw data had been altered accordingly. There was a diversity of perspectives among the individual military servicemen in Malaysia. Critical data and information were needed for the research to strengthen the argument; however, only a small portion of that information could be obtained. Due to the privileged information,

the general public cannot learn certain classified information about the military departments since it requires a high level of security and confidentiality.

Finally, the military authorities may consider offering economic support through tuition compensation to the military officers to gain current knowledge about their careers. For instance, they may provide time for employees to learn by allowing them not to report to work for off-the-job training and development. The study also recommends that the senior management of the Malaysia Armed Forces (MAF) practise coaching and mentoring. Coaching will involve setting a favourable environment, actively listening to the employee, asking questions and providing useful feedback. Mentoring will involve senior military officers counselling, listening to feelings and stimulating employees through ideas and information. It is a development-oriented relationship between senior and junior officers that entails giving advice, sharing interactions and giving all-purpose support. Informal mentoring will be effective as it will lead to openness. Also, the study recommends that military officers in Malaysia should take it upon themselves to enhance their career development and growth. They should become team members and update themselves with current knowledge, skills and abilities.

Overall, the organisations must carefully plan and manage each employee's career since the effectiveness of the HRM is critical to the organisation's success and efficiency. Organisations may use careers to establish an employee's duties and functions within a certain function. Organisations must thus comprehend the information and skills needed to carry out a particular task. They must also consider the employees' interests and the work's tasks and obligations. With the human resource package component, the career development aided employees in becoming resilient and self-assured as the organisation adjusted to changing economic conditions. The career development boosted employees' employability and broadened the range of opportunities available to them, lengthening their stay with the organisation. It is well established that employees with professional autonomy are better able to collaborate and satisfy expectations at work. Employees will be happier at work and contribute to the organisation's success if career planning and development are successful. For further research, defence and security organisations such as the military may study the effectiveness of training institutions that support military career growth and transition from service to post-service. Other than

that, from the current study, it is suggested that researchers look at career management for other ranks in the military as the determinant influence of career development and job satisfaction.

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