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EXPLORING THE MOTIVATIONS AND FACTORS THAT INFLUENCE INDIVIDUALS TO ENLIST IN THE MILITARY PRIOR TO COMPLETING THEIR COLLEGE EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the motivations and factors that influenced Philippine Air Force (PAF) enlisted personnel to enter military service before completing college education. It examined participants' reasons for enlistment and the institutional, occupational, socio-cultural, and contextual conditions that shaped their decisions. A qualitative phenomenological design was employed, involving 20 active-duty PAF enlisted personnel who had enlisted without completing higher education. Data were collected through semi-structured, in-depth interviews using a researcher-developed guide that underwent expert validation and pilot testing. Interview recordings were transcribed verbatim and analyzed through Braun and Clarke's reflexive thematic analysis. The findings indicate that enlistment was influenced by immediate financial needs, family responsibilities, the desire for stable employment, patriotism, personal aspirations, and opportunities for skills development. Participants perceived the PAF as offering institutional accessibility, structured training, discipline, benefits, job security, and a pathway for career progression. Family expectations, concern about the cost and safety of continuing education, limited civilian employment opportunities, social recognition, and the symbolic value of the uniform also shaped their decisions. Across the accounts, these motivations were interconnected rather than isolated: enlistment provided an immediate response to economic and family demands while offering a longer-term route toward professional development, personal growth, and national service. The study proposes the PAF Enlisted Personnel Career Empowerment and Development Program (PAF-ECEDP), emphasizing career planning, continuing education, skills development, family support, resilience, values formation, and career identity. The findings may inform recruitment communication and personnel-development initiatives while recognizing the limits of transferability beyond the study setting.

KEYWORDS: *Philippine Air Force, Military Enlistment, Phenomenology, Reflexive Thematic Analysis, Career Development*

INTRODUCTION

Military service contributes to national defense, territorial integrity, and security while also providing an occupational pathway for eligible citizens. For some young Filipinos, enlistment offers more than a means of serving the country: it can provide regular income, structured training, employment stability, and opportunities for advancement. These considerations may become especially important for individuals who face financial hardship or who cannot complete college education before entering employment.

Research on military recruitment has described the interaction between material incentives and institutional or identity-based motivations. Economic security, benefits, technical training, and career progression may attract applicants, while patriotism, discipline, belonging, and public service can give military employment personal and social meaning (Krebs & Ralston, 2022; Maslow, 1943; Moskos, 1977). Research also suggests that recruitment decisions are shaped by the opportunities available in the labor market, family expectations, community perceptions, and access to higher education (Martinez & Huerta, 2020). These factors may be particularly relevant where the cost of education and the uncertainty of civilian employment make immediate work a practical priority.

In the Philippine context, existing discussions of military participation often focus on ROTC, military training, recruitment policy, or officer career pathways. Less attention has been given to the lived experiences of PAF enlisted personnel who entered service before completing college. Understanding this group requires attention not only to why individuals enlisted, but also to how institutional opportunities, occupational expectations, family responsibilities, and social meanings converged in their decisions.

The present study addresses this gap by exploring the motivations and factors that influenced enlisted personnel in the Philippine Air Force to enlist before completing higher education. The study is situated within the Headquarters Administrative Services under the Air Installation and Base Development Command (AIBDC), Colonel Jesus Villamor Air Base, Pasay City, Metro Manila. It focuses on participants' own accounts of the circumstances, choices, and meanings associated with their enlistment.

The study draws on the Occupational–Institutional Model, Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Expectancy Theory, and Push–Pull Theory as interpretive lenses. These perspectives help frame how employment security and organizational benefits may interact with needs, expectations, values, family obligations, and

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perceived opportunities. They are used to support interpretation rather than to predetermine participants' accounts.

Statement of the Problem:

This study focuses on examining the motivations, institutional and occupational factors, socio-cultural factors of Philippine Air Force (PAF) personnel enlisting without college completion; it aims to explore the factors that contribute to enlisting in these services. In accordance with this, the sub-problems addressed in the present study are:

1. What motivations influenced the enlistment of PAF personnel without completing higher education?
2. What factors influenced the enlistment of PAF personnel without completing higher education?
   a) Institutional Factors
   b) Occupational Factors
   c) Socio-Cultural and Contextual Factors
3. How do the participants' motivations and factors collectively shape the enlistment decisions of PAF personnel without completing higher education?
4. Based from the findings, what output may be recommended?

METHODOLOGY

Research design and approach

A qualitative phenomenological research design was used to explore the lived experiences of PAF enlisted personnel who joined the service before completing higher education. This approach was appropriate because the inquiry concerned participants' motivations, perceptions, life circumstances, and the meanings they attributed to their enlistment decisions. The analysis emphasized the accounts provided by participants rather than numerical measurement or statistical generalization.

Research setting and participants

The study was conducted among enlisted personnel assigned to the Headquarters Administrative Services, Air Installation and Base Development Command, Colonel Jesus Villamor Air Base, Pasay City, Metro Manila. The study focused on active-duty PAF enlisted personnel who had enlisted without completing higher education. Officers, civilian employees, and personnel who had completed college before entering the service were outside the stated scope.

Twenty active-duty PAF enlisted personnel participated. Purposive sampling was used to recruit individuals whose experiences matched the study's inclusion criteria. The sample was selected to provide information-rich accounts relevant to the research questions. Because participants were drawn from one organizational setting, findings are context-specific and should not be treated as statistically representative of all PAF units or other branches of the Armed Forces of the Philippines.

Research Instrument

Data were gathered using a researcher-developed semi-structured interview guide informed by the study's objectives, conceptual framework, and literature on military enlistment. The guide explored institutional factors such as recruitment requirements, benefits, job security, and training; occupational factors such as career progression, skill acquisition, and long-term employment; and socio-cultural factors such as family influence, community perceptions, socioeconomic circumstances, and the symbolic value of military service. Two research experts reviewed the guide for clarity, relevance, and coverage. Feedback was incorporated before the guide was pilot-tested with PAF personnel who were not part of the main study.

Data-Gathering Procedure

The researcher prepared the interview guide, consent forms, and formal requests for permission and secured the required institutional and military approvals. Potential participants who met the inclusion criteria were contacted and informed about the study's purpose, procedures, voluntary nature, confidentiality protections, and right to withdraw without penalty. Written informed consent was obtained before interviews. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews were conducted at agreed locations or through secure digital platforms when necessary. With participants' consent, interviews were audio-recorded, and field notes were prepared to capture relevant contextual observations.

Recordings were transcribed verbatim and reviewed against the audio files for accuracy. Selected participants were invited to review or confirm their statements. Transcripts and associated records were stored in password-protected files and restricted to authorized access.

Data analysis

The interview data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase approach to thematic analysis, applied reflexively. The researcher first became familiar with the transcripts and recordings, then generated initial codes for meaningful statements relating to motivations, institutional conditions, occupational expectations, and socio-cultural influences. Related codes were developed into candidate themes; themes were reviewed against the dataset and research questions, refined, defined, and named; and the findings were written as an interpretive account supported by participant statements in the full thesis. The condensed manuscript retains the principal themes and their meaning while avoiding the reproduction of every subtheme and extended quotation.

Credibility and dependability were supported through transcript review, member checking with selected participants, and an audit trail documenting coding and theme development. Reflexive thematic analysis treats themes as analytic constructions developed through engagement with the data, rather than as findings that emerge automatically or mechanically.

Ethical Considerations

Participation was voluntary and based on informed consent. Participants were advised of the study's purpose, procedures, potential risks and benefits, confidentiality measures, and right to withdraw. Responses were identified through codes rather than names in the analysis. The researcher sought to maintain neutrality during interviews and to avoid leading questions. Data

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were used for academic purposes, stored securely, and made accessible only to authorized persons in accordance with the ethical procedures described in the thesis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of interviews with 20 Philippine Air Force (PAF) enlisted personnel indicated that enlistment before completing higher education was shaped by a combination of immediate needs, perceived opportunities, family relationships, institutional conditions, and personal aspirations. The themes below preserve the central meanings and terminology presented in the thesis while consolidating related findings for a journal-length IMRAD manuscript. Participant quotations are identified by the codes used in the source manuscript.

1. Motivations for enlistment before completing higher education

Theme 1. Household relief and the responsibility to contribute

A recurring motivation was the need to help meet household expenses and reduce the financial burden on parents. For participants whose families could not continue financing their education, enlistment offered a way to earn sooner rather than remain dependent on relatives while pursuing a degree. The decision was therefore embedded in family circumstances, not simply an individual preference for military life. One participant explained that "my parents could no longer afford to support the education of all their children at the same time," and described applying for military service as a continuing career path (PAR3). Another participant connected enlistment directly to the need for money and family security (PAR5). These accounts illustrate how limited household resources could make immediate employment more urgent than the delayed returns associated with college completion.

The theme of household relief also suggests that participants understood employment as a way to assume adult responsibilities and contribute to family welfare. The decision to enlist did not necessarily mean that education was considered unimportant. Instead, the timing of education was weighed against immediate financial obligations. For participants who needed to help their families, the PAF was perceived as a practical route to income and independence. This interpretation is consistent with the study's use of the Occupational–Institutional Model, particularly its attention to the occupational value of salary, benefits, and employment security (Moskos, 1977).

Theme 2. Stability, security, and the value of immediate employment

Participants also described military service as offering a more predictable employment pathway than waiting to complete college and then searching for work. Regular income, allowances, benefits, and a structured career environment contributed to their perception of stability. PAR2 stated, "The PAF gave me a clear career path and financial security right away as a young adult." Another participant emphasized that military employment provided income and benefits that could support family members and allow future educational plans to remain possible (PAR10). These accounts show that stability was understood in both immediate and long-term terms: it could address present needs while giving participants a basis for planning ahead.

For some participants, the comparison was not between a valuable military career and a worthless degree. It was between a concrete employment opportunity available at that point and the uncertain prospect of securing work after several more years of education. This distinction is important because it frames enlistment as a context-dependent decision. The findings align with the Occupational–Institutional Model in that material and career incentives formed part of the appeal of military service, while the institutional setting also offered identity, discipline, and belonging. They do not establish that military employment is universally more secure or preferable than civilian work; they describe how participants perceived their options when making their decisions.

Theme 3. Patriotism, personal growth, and self-actualization

Economic considerations were not the only motivations reported. Participants also described a long-standing desire to become soldiers, serve the country, develop discipline, and achieve personal goals. One participant explained that becoming a soldier had been a childhood aspiration and that college was approached partly as a way to meet the entry requirements for the PAF (PAR1). Another stated that military service offered an opportunity "not just to serve but to improve myself as well" (PAR12). Such accounts indicate that enlistment could be meaningful in itself, rather than merely a response to financial hardship.

These experiences reflect the theme of Patriotism and Self-Actualization: service to the country was linked with self-improvement, competence, discipline, and the fulfillment of a personal dream. Maslow's (1943) framework provides one interpretive lens, as participants' accounts connected security needs with esteem and personal growth. However, the data also suggest that these aspirations were pursued within practical limits. Participants could value service and self-development while still needing income and family stability. Intrinsic and extrinsic motivations therefore coexisted rather than operating as mutually exclusive explanations.

Theme 4. Opportunities and practical learning offered by the PAF

Participants perceived the PAF as providing immediate employment together with practical experience, training, and opportunities to develop work-related skills. The source thesis groups these accounts under "The Guarantees in a Volatile Market," "A Path to Independence," and "Application over Academics." Taken together, the themes suggest that the PAF was seen as offering an attainable route into employment and adult independence, particularly when the cost and duration of higher education made continued study difficult. Some participants valued the opportunity to learn through training and experience while already employed, rather than postponing income until after graduation.

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This finding should not be interpreted as evidence that participants rejected formal education or believed it had no value. Rather, their accounts emphasized the immediate utility of training and work experience in their particular circumstances. Military service was viewed as an alternative route for professional development, and in some cases as a possible foundation for later educational or career advancement. Expectancy Theory helps interpret this choice: participants perceived a link between entering service, meeting performance expectations, gaining experience, and accessing future opportunities (Vroom, 1964). The perceived value of these opportunities contributed to the attractiveness of enlistment.

Theme 5. Family and community views: pride, support, and educational tension

Family and community responses shaped how participants understood their decisions. The source thesis identifies "The Pride of Enlistment," "Enthusiasm and Pragmatism," and "Tensions of Academic Ideals." Some families encouraged enlistment or supported it because it aligned with the participant's dream. Others continued to value a college degree as a safer or more traditional route to success and worried about the demands and risks of military service. One participant noted that education had always been regarded by their parents as "a valuable inheritance that no one can take away from us" (PAR6). This account demonstrates that support for military service could coexist with a strong belief in the importance of education.

At the same time, successful enlistment could become a source of family pride. A participant described the family as proud after the participant completed training and achieved the goal of entering service, adding that the goal was to provide a better life for the family (PAR1). Other participants reported that their families supported them because they knew military service had been a personal dream (PAR19). The accounts therefore suggest a dynamic process: families could initially be concerned about interrupted education or occupational risk, but the visible achievement of enlistment and the practical benefits of employment could strengthen acceptance and pride. Family influence was neither uniformly supportive nor uniformly discouraging; it was negotiated through expectations, needs, and experiences.

2. Institutional, occupational, and socio-cultural factors

Theme 1. Recruitment accessibility and alternative demonstrations of readiness

Participants perceived enlistment as achievable without a completed college degree because academic attainment was not understood to be the only indicator of suitability. The source thesis identifies "Academic Substitute," "Holistic Balance," and "Character Alignment" as themes associated with recruitment policies and entry requirements. Participants referred to alternative educational qualifications, including the completion of a required number of college units, as well as physical and mental readiness, discipline, moral character, and the capacity to comply with military standards. PAR1, for example, described completing 72 college units and ROTC preparation as part of the pathway that enabled entry.

These accounts reflect a perception that military readiness is multidimensional. Participants believed that relevant qualifications, fitness, conduct, and willingness to learn could demonstrate suitability even when a four-year degree had not been completed. This does not mean that standards were absent or that every applicant without a degree could qualify. The finding concerns participants' understanding of the available entry pathway and the forms of readiness they believed the institution valued. The institutional implication is that recruitment information should clearly explain the applicable eligibility requirements and distinguish alternative qualifications from exemptions or reduced standards.

Theme 3. Institutional benefits as economic protection

Participants described stable employment and institutional benefits as important advantages of military service. The thesis discusses these perceptions through the themes of economic shelter, alternative opportunity, and a long-term safety net. Benefits such as medical and dental care, housing-related support, allowances, and continuing income were seen as helping protect personnel against economic uncertainty. These benefits mattered not only as additions to salary but also because participants connected them with the ability to meet basic needs and assist family members. The source thesis also records participants' observation that uniformed service continued to provide employment during periods when civilian work was perceived as less dependable.

The value attached to these benefits was relational: participants evaluated them in light of their own financial situation, household responsibilities, and available alternatives. For a person who needed to earn immediately, a package combining income and support could appear more actionable than the potential future returns of a degree. This is consistent with the economic dimension of military recruitment discussed in the thesis literature (Martinez & Huerta, 2020). Nevertheless, the findings report participants' perceptions and should not be read as a comparative assessment of all military and university benefits or as a guarantee that every benefit is available under every circumstance.

Theme 4. Career progression, civilian employment, and the role of credentials

Participants viewed the PAF as offering a structured career pathway involving experience, training, promotion, specialization, and opportunities to demonstrate performance. The source thesis names "Security and Stability," "The Career Pipeline," and "Civilian Opportunities" as themes in the comparison between military and civilian employment. Participants acknowledged that civilian work could offer varied opportunities, but some perceived civilian entry-level employment as difficult to access without a completed degree. PAR12 stated that civilian job opportunities required credentials that the participant could not yet provide, including a college

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degree. This perception strengthened the appeal of a military career that appeared more attainable at that stage of life.

A related theme, "The Merits of Meritocracy," reflected participants' belief that discipline, training, competence, and performance could support advancement in the PAF. The data indicate that participants valued the possibility of progressing through an established organizational structure. At the same time, these are accounts of perceived opportunities, not evidence that advancement is automatic or that military employment is superior to all civilian pathways. Career progression remains dependent on applicable standards, performance, qualifications, vacancies, and institutional rules. The practical implication is that personnel may benefit from clear guidance about promotion criteria and the educational or technical qualifications associated with different career paths.

Theme 5. The uniform, professional identity, and social recognition

Participants attached strong symbolic meaning to wearing the PAF uniform. The source thesis identifies "Visual Transformation" and "The Symbol of the Uniform" as themes related to social respect and prestige. Participants described the uniform as a visible marker of responsibility, discipline, service, and professional identity. PAR10 described the experience as feeling like "going from nobody to somebody," while PAR20 associated the uniform with pride, respect, and honor even without a college degree because of service to the country. These statements suggest that enlistment could change how participants viewed themselves and how they believed others viewed them.

The uniform was therefore more than an item of clothing: it symbolized membership in an institution, public responsibility, and achievement. For participants who had not completed higher education, this identity could provide recognition that they believed was not available through their previous status as undergraduates. The finding should not be interpreted as a claim that social respect is guaranteed or that a uniform replaces educational credentials. Rather, it captures the subjective significance of military identity in the participants' accounts and shows how social recognition could reinforce their sense that enlistment had been the right decision.

3. How motivations and factors interacted

Theme 1. A necessary choice for stability and a vocational stepping stone

When participants explained how their motivations and circumstances worked together, enlistment emerged as both a response to immediate constraints and a pathway toward future goals. The thesis identifies "A Necessary Choice for Stability," "Vocational Stepping Stones," and "Vindication Amidst Adversity." Financial difficulties, family responsibilities, and limited access to civilian employment made immediate work important; at the same time, military service was viewed as a means of gaining skills, confidence, and career experience. These accounts show that the decision could be practical without being devoid of aspiration.

Some participants described service as a way to move forward despite hardship and to prove their capability to themselves and others. PAR6 stated that self-confidence and the hardships experienced had served as primary sources of motivation. PAR3 connected fulfillment with being able to support family members and afford things that had previously seemed beyond reach. Such accounts suggest that enlistment was meaningful because it offered not only income but also evidence of personal progress. The theme of vindication amid adversity highlights how participants interpreted their achievements in relation to the challenges they had experienced.

Theme 2. Family duty and the guarantees associated with military service

Family responsibility repeatedly reinforced the appeal of the PAF. Participants described a need to support parents, contribute to household expenses, or become financially independent. In their accounts, the opportunity to earn immediately was especially important because college could require more time and resources before leading to employment. The "Duty to the Family" and "Guarantees of the Military" themes therefore connect household obligations with the perceived availability of stable work, income, and benefits.

This interaction helps explain why educational aspirations could be postponed without being abandoned. For some participants, enlistment appeared to offer a foundation from which to support family members and consider further study or career development later. PAR10 explained that the PAF was stable and provided benefits that could support the family while leaving open the possibility of continuing studies in the future. The accounts thus point to sequencing rather than a simple either-or choice: participants prioritized military employment at that time, while education remained a valued future possibility for some.

Theme 3. Interconnecting drivers and the economic lifeline

The final synthesis of participants' accounts is captured by "Interconnecting Drivers," "The Economic Lifeline," and "Overcoming Hardships and Fulfillments." Financial need increased the importance of immediate employment; family obligations strengthened the need for dependable income; perceived barriers in civilian hiring made military service appear more accessible; and the promise of training, career development, service, and recognition gave enlistment a broader personal meaning. PAR17 explicitly described the decision as the result of external pressures and personal motivation coming together rather than one single reason. PAR20 similarly linked the need to earn immediately, family support, and the stable career offered by the PAF.

The findings are compatible with Push–Pull Theory: economic and educational constraints could push participants toward seeking immediate work, while the perceived advantages of military service pulled them toward enlistment. Expectancy Theory offers a complementary interpretation because participants associated entry, effort, training, and performance with possible career rewards (Vroom, 1964). Maslow's

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framework helps explain why security and family needs could be especially salient while esteem, identity, and self-development also mattered (Maslow, 1943). These theories are interpretive lenses; the primary evidence remains participants' accounts, and the qualitative design does not establish causal effects or the relative strength of each factor across the broader PAF population.

Overall Interpretation

Across the themes, participants did not present enlistment as a decision caused exclusively by poverty, patriotism, family influence, or the appeal of benefits. Rather, they described a decision made at the intersection of necessity, opportunity, responsibility, and aspiration. Military service offered what participants perceived as a timely route to income and stability, while also providing a framework for learning, discipline, professional identity, and service to the country. Family and community responses added social meaning, sometimes through pride and support and sometimes through concern about the value and safety of education and military employment.

The results also caution against interpreting enlistment before college completion as evidence that participants dismissed higher education. The source thesis repeatedly describes education as valuable, even when immediate circumstances made military employment the more practical option. Some participants saw training and work experience as forms of development in their own right; others hoped to continue studying or improve their qualifications later. Accordingly, recruitment and personnel-development strategies may be more responsive when they acknowledge both the immediate employment needs of applicants and the longer-term value many continue to place on education.

4. Proposed programs: PAF Enlisted Personnel Career Empowerment and Development Program

Based on the themes, the thesis proposes the PAF Enlisted Personnel Career Empowerment and Development Program (PAF-ECEDP). The proposed program is a response to the needs and aspirations described by participants; it has not been evaluated in this study, and its effectiveness should not be assumed. Its components should be reviewed by relevant PAF offices for alignment with existing policies, available resources, and personnel-development priorities.

Enlisted career development and mentoring. Provide periodic information on career pathways, promotion requirements, performance expectations, leadership opportunities, technical specialization, and relevant training. Where appropriate, mentoring may help personnel translate individual aspirations into realistic development goals.

Continuing education and skills advancement. Disseminate accurate information about available scholarships, recognized educational pathways, technical-vocational certification, flexible or distance-learning arrangements, and other opportunities compatible with service requirements. This component reflects participants' continuing valuation of education and skills development.

Individual career and education planning. Offer voluntary planning sessions that consider each person's career objectives, educational goals, training needs, family responsibilities, and professional interests. Planning should acknowledge that personnel may be at different stages and should not assume that every individual has the same educational or career priorities.

Family support and information. Where appropriate, provide clear information for personnel and their families about career pathways, service demands, benefits, and available support systems. This component responds to the finding that family expectations and concerns can influence how enlistment decisions are understood and supported.

Values, resilience, and professional identity development. Incorporate suitable activities on ethical service, discipline, accountability, adaptability, leadership, and resilience. These activities respond to participants' emphasis on personal growth, service, pride, and the responsibilities symbolized by the uniform. Monitoring and evaluation. If the program is adopted, responsible offices should define objectives, activities, timelines, resources, and appropriate indicators before implementation. Feedback from personnel and periodic review may be used to refine the program. The present study provides a qualitative basis for proposing these components but does not establish their feasibility or effectiveness.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study indicates that PAF enlisted personnel who entered service before completing higher education made their decisions through an interaction of economic needs, family responsibilities, occupational opportunities, institutional conditions, personal aspirations, and socio-cultural meanings. Immediate income and employment stability were central, but enlistment was also associated with patriotism, discipline, skills development, social recognition, and the possibility of career progression. Participants perceived the PAF as a structured occupational pathway that could respond to immediate needs while offering opportunities for future growth.

The findings suggest that enlistment should not be reduced to a single explanation, such as financial hardship or patriotism alone. Participants' experiences reflected both constraints and aspirations: economic and educational circumstances shaped the options they considered, while perceived institutional benefits and the meaning of military service helped make enlistment an attainable and purposeful choice. Because the study involved 20 participants in one PAF setting, the findings offer contextual insight rather than statistical generalization to all military personnel.

Recommendations

The Philippine Air Force Human Resource Management Center and relevant recruitment offices may use the findings as supplementary evidence when reviewing recruitment communication and personnel-development initiatives for qualified applicants who have not completed higher education,

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while maintaining applicable standards of competence, discipline, and professionalism.

Recruitment and public-information offices may provide clear and accurate information about entry requirements, career progression, benefits, training, and continuing-education opportunities. Career-orientation activities with appropriate schools and community partners may help prospective applicants and their families understand military service as one possible career pathway, including its demands and responsibilities.

PAF personnel-development and education offices may review how educational assistance, skills training, mentoring, and career planning are communicated and accessed by enlisted personnel who wish to pursue further development. Relevant offices may also consider family-oriented information and support, recognizing that family responsibilities and parental concerns shaped participants' accounts.

The proposed PAF-ECEDP may be reviewed by relevant stakeholders for feasibility, alignment with existing policies, resource requirements, and measurable objectives before implementation. Future research may examine enlisted personnel from other PAF units or other branches of the Armed Forces of the Philippines and may compare experiences across educational and socioeconomic backgrounds. Further studies may also explore how educational advancement, career progression, and retention develop over time.

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