Beyond the Highlight Reel:
Perceived Accuracy in Realistic Job Previews and Job Outcomes

by

Victoria Cluney

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

in

Organizational Psychology

Carleton University
Ottawa, Ontario

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Victoria Cluney
Abstract

New employees are not always provided realistic expectations about organizational life in their places of work; over time, this may result in unmet expectations and influence employee outcomes. Guided by psychological contract theory, I examined whether changes in the perceived accuracy of realistic job previews were associated with subsequent employee attitudinal outcomes (i.e., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance, and turnover intentions). Using data from 980 Canadian Armed Forces members, findings indicated when employee perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview were higher at time 2 as compared to time 1, attitudinal outcomes were less positive at time 2. Further, analysis of an open-ended question indicated that members wished they knew more about training, job tasks, and career progression when they began their careers. These findings highlight the importance of accurate realistic job previews and may inspire organizations to improve the recruitment process to enhance employee outcomes.

Keywords: Realistic job preview, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance, job satisfaction, turnover intentions, psychological contract theory.
Acknowledgements

I am deeply grateful to Dr. Dupré for her active support and guidance throughout the past two years of my graduate studies. Thank you for your dedication, patience, and expertise. It has been truly invaluable to me and played a crucial role in shaping my academic journey. I also want to give a big shout-out to Dr. O’Keefe, who has been a long-term mentor of mine (since agreeing to advise my undergrad thesis in 2013). Thank you to my lab mates, especially Chelsie, Audrey, Patricia, and Jenn. Your input has been invaluable.

A sincere thank you to Dr. Mantler for recognizing the passion behind my research topic and encouraging me to dig deeper into my “why”. I greatly appreciate your support and the impact you’ve had on the final product of my paper. To Dr. Bujaki I would also like to extend my gratitude for you valuable contribution to my thesis research and defense. Your time, knowledge and input is very much appreciated. To Dr. Bennell, thank you for taking the time to chair my defense. Your leadership was calming and I was grateful for the structure. A really big thank you also goes to Etelle for being so readily available to answer any question I had, I’m very grateful for the support.

Last, but certainly not least, to my husband (Jeff) and son (James). It is hard to articulate how much love and appreciation I have for your unwavering support. You two are my rocks and have been the best cheerleaders anyone could ask for. I am so lucky to have such a loving and supportive family to ride through this crazy life with.
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Perceived Realistic Job Previews and Job Outcomes

A realistic job preview is a tool that is used by employers to provide potential employees with an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the duties, work environment, and other aspects of a job (Wanous, 1973; Saks & Gordon, 2021). Employers have long recognized the importance of providing a clear and accurate portrayal of a job, as it can improve both retention and performance, as well as help to set clear expectations for both the employer and the employee (Hom et al., 1998; Porter & Steers, 1973; Buckley et al., 2002; Saks & Gordon, 2021). When employees see their job preview as having been more realistic and accurate, they experience more positive outcomes as compared to the situation where they see their job preview as unrealistic and inaccurate (e.g., Pitt & Ramaseshan, 1995; Wanous, 2012; Saks & Gordon, 2021).

Although realistic job previews have been widely focused on in both research and practice, little attention has been placed on how an employee’s perception of job information received over time affects them. As employees embark on their new employment, their initial perceptions of realistic job previews may align with the reality they encounter in their jobs. However, as they progress and gain firsthand experiences, new information surfaces that can potentially reshape their perspectives and subsequently impact their job-related attitudes (Liu et al., 2018). Thus, the purpose of this research is to investigate the relationship between changes in the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview over time and employee attitudinal outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work-life balance, and turnover intentions. More specifically, I aim to explore employees’ perceptions of the realistic job preview at two distinct time points – time 1, occurring within two months after the employees’ initial
hire, and time 2, approximately one year later – to determine if attitudinal outcomes are associated with changes in the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview over time.

**Rationale and Research Perspective**

Although realistic job previews have widespread importance, the unique characteristics of certain types of organizations may result in this tool being even more important. Of relevance to the current research, military organizations are unique in many ways including the high costs of training, high rates of employee attrition, widespread implications of employee attitudes, and diverse job characteristics (Mckay & Avery, 2005). Careers in the military are often described as unique in that there is much variation in terms of the job over time, however this is not unlike many other organizations where change is commonplace. Although the prevalence of change in a job may make realistic job previews more challenging, it does not negate the value of providing a realistic job preview given the many positive outcomes associated with these hiring tools. Thus, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) serves as an ideal setting to investigate the association between perceptions of realistic job previews and attitudinal outcomes.

The CAF recognizes that a diverse workforce is critical to its success in fulfilling its mission and has made efforts to attract and recruit members from diverse cultures, genders, and ethnicities. The Women in Force program (e.g., Government of Canada, 2017), Indigenous recruitment efforts, and outreach to visible minority communities are examples of initiatives implemented by the CAF to increase diversity, equity and inclusion within its ranks (Canadian Forces Recruiting Group, 2022). While realistic job previews may help organizations attract a more diverse pool of applicants who are suited to the demands of the job (Levine & Bitterly, 2018), it is possible that organizations
involved in these initiatives will face challenges in effectively presenting a comprehensive representation of the work experience for these unique groups. Again, while this may make realistic job previews more challenging, the fact remains that there are positive outcomes associated with realistic job previews, and they should thus be considered as a tool in the hiring process. That said, it is important to better understand the impact that realistic job previews have on employees’ workplace attitudes, particularly in organizations where it may be especially challenging to provide a realistic job preview.

While the findings of this research have the potential to shed light on the importance of providing accurate and informative job previews to employees at the onset of their careers – particularly within military contexts but also more broadly – it is important to acknowledge my personal connection to this topic. I experienced the consequences of receiving inconsistent and inaccurate information during the realistic job preview process in the CAF. My experience and the challenges I faced in my early days in the infantry are a driving force behind my passion for examining perceptions of realistic job previews. I joined the CAF four days after my 18th birthday, more than twenty years ago. When I joined the CAF, I was young and inexperienced, but further, given the information I received I did not have an accurate understanding of what to expect in the job. I managed to push through the difficulties and eventually adapt to my environment, but many do not take this route and choose to leave or may stay but with negative job-related attitudes. Had I been provided with an accurate understanding of what to expect, I believe that although adapting to the job would have indeed been challenging, I would have been better equipped to deal with it and may have had more positive outcomes as a result. This experience has inspired me to focus on realistic job
previews in an effort to contribute to the understanding of how they influence employees, and ultimately organizations via their effect on employees.

I currently work as a Personnel Selection Officer in the CAF and continue to see how inadequate job information influences new hires. In my experience, too many members enter the forces with misconceptions that over time lead to negative employee outcomes. I believe that providing employees with accurate and comprehensive job information during the recruitment process is critical to ensuring their success in the workplace, and ultimately, thriving organizations.

**Realistic Job Previews**

Meeting the demands and needs of employees in their job roles is an important task for organizations, as the consequences of unmet expectations can be both costly and burdensome for an organization (Houkes et al., 2003; Proost et al., 2012). Normally, the employee recruitment process is the time to “sell” the organization and employment opportunity to a job candidate. Organizational representatives may do this by placing emphasis on the positive aspects of the workplace and job such as training and promotion opportunities (Wanous, 1980, 2012), while realistic job previews tend to take a more well-rounded approach by highlighting both negative (e.g., higher job demands, or limited development opportunities) and positive aspects of the job (Bilal & Bashir, 2016).

Realistic job previews are ideally designed to provide job candidates with an accurate and comprehensive understanding of the duties, responsibilities, and challenges of a particular job before they apply or accept an offer (e.g., Morse, 2007; Premack & Wanous, 1985; Wanous, 2012). Research suggests that realistic job previews are associated with several organizational and individual outcomes, including reduced turnover (Porter & Steers, 1973; Saks & Gordon, 2021; Wanous, 1980), improved job
performance, and increased job satisfaction (Buckley et al., 2002); perhaps more fundamentally, realistic job previews assist job candidates in determining if they are a good match with the job and organization (Wanous, 1973; Wanous & Colella, 1989).

Realistic job previews are a popular strategy for organizations looking to attract and retain top talent and can be presented in various forms and through a variety of methods (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016; Liu et al., 2018). Realistic job previews are argued to impact employees through the effect they have on individuals’ expectations, which may occur through various methods. One mechanism proposed by Meglino and DeNisi (1997) is referred to as the adjustment of expectations effect. This effect highlights the importance of providing a realistic job preview to potential employees with a clear and accurate portrayal of the job duties, work environment, and other aspects of the position. With this approach, employers help to manage the expectations of potential employees and prevent disappointment and dissatisfaction in the long term, which may lead to improved job satisfaction, increased commitment, and a decrease in turnover (Meglino & DeNisi, 1997).

Different methods of delivering realistic job previews include verbal presentations, job tours, written brochures, and videos, with some at times considered more useful or effective given their impact and cost-effectiveness (e.g., videos; Liu et al., 2018). Overall, it is important that the information provided in realistic job previews is both thorough and accurate (Haden, 2012). Liu et al. (2018) discussed the importance of recruiting the right talent in industries with high turnover and low commitment levels. Recruiters are concerned about the effectiveness of job recruitment messages because job seekers receive information from multiple sources. The credibility of the recruitment
information, particularly as a realistic job preview, plays a critical role in shaping a candidate’s willingness to join an organization.

In a competitive market, it is crucial for organizations to attract and retain high-quality, productive employees (Mustafa, 2010). As such, realistic job previews can provide a competitive advantage for organizations in the long term (Mustafa, 2010). Overall, realistic job previews are designed to help job candidates make informed and effective decisions about whether a particular job is a good fit for their skills, interests, and goals (Meglino & DeNisi, 1997), and also tend to provide benefits to the organizations that utilize them.

**Perceived Accuracy of the Realistic Job Preview**

As discussed above, realistic job previews involve providing job candidates with a realistic look into what a job is actually like, and it is undoubtedly important to understand what constitutes a strong realistic job preview in and of itself. However, while the intention of a realistic job preview is to provide an accurate depiction of the position to job candidates, it is important to consider that it is perceptions of the accuracy of these realistic job previews that will ultimately influence individuals (see Frese & Zapf, 1988 for a discussion of perceptions versus objective measures). Perceived accuracy of a realistic job preview reflects the extent to which an employee believes that the information provided during the recruitment process was an accurate representation of the position they are currently in (Miao et al., 2013; Saks & McCarthy, 1995; Taylor, 1994; Wanous et al., 1992). Because research indicates that it is individuals’ perceptions that influence their behaviours and attitudes, in this research I focus on employees’ perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview.
When realistic job previews are conducted correctly, it is expected that the perceived accuracy of the previews should remain stable over time (Meglino & DeNisi, 1997). This indicates that employees’ initial perceptions of the job and organization, as presented during the recruitment and orientation process, align with their actual experience on the job. Consistency between the information provided in the job preview and the subsequent reality helps to establish a strong psychological contract, fostering positive attitudes and commitment among employees (Meglino & DeNisi, 1997). Previous findings also suggest that when employees’ pre-hire expectations align with their post-hire experience, their attitudinal outcomes are likely to be higher (Bilal & Bashir, 2016). Sutton and Griffin (2004) investigated the relationship between pre-entry expectations and post-entry experiences in relation to realistic job previews. In their study, they found that realistic job previews can help set expectations and if these expectations match with employees’ post-job experiences, it can lead to greater satisfaction for employees. These findings suggest that when what was provided in the realistic job preview is subsequently perceived of as accurate, employee attitudinal outcomes may be more positive. Job attitudes reflect employees’ feelings and beliefs about their job, and research has shown that favourable job attitudes are positively correlated with performance at both the individual and organizational level (Harter et al., 2020). Additionally, change in perceptions is important because initial expectations may not always align with the job experience. Over time, employees gain more information and firsthand knowledge about their job, which can lead to shifts in their perceptions that ultimately impact, among other outcomes, their job-related attitudes (Liu et al., 2018).

Overall, while research alludes to the fact that it is the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview post-hire that is associated with work-related attitudinal outcomes,
research has focused on this to a far lesser extent than it has on the realistic job preview itself. Porter and Steers (1973) described unmet job expectations as the difference between the reality of an employee’s job and their initial expectations. This concept has been explored in various ways in the literature, such as in an examination of the conflict between an employee’s organization and profession (Lait & Wallace, 2002) and the surprise and disappointment of the reality of a job compared to expectations (Wanous, 1992). In the current study, I examine the association between changes in the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview and each of job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance and turnover intentions.

**Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction is the sense of fulfillment and positive emotion an employee experiences in their job (Saari & Judge, 2004). Given its association with positive organizational outcomes job satisfaction is often considered a sign of a successful and profitable organization (Kian et al., 2014). Empirical evidence indicates that employee expectations, in terms of the assumptions and behaviour that employees expect employers to take, influences job satisfaction (Bilal & Bashir, 2016).

Previous research supports a positive association between realistic job previews and job satisfaction. Popovich and Wanous (1982) found that when employees were given realistic job previews as part of the recruitment process, they were more likely to experience higher job satisfaction compared to those who were not given realistic job previews (see also Premack & Wanous, 1985; Rynes, 1991). It has been argued that information that helps new employees to formulate realistic expectations about the job will result in more job satisfaction for these employees (Bashir et al., 2016; Premack & Wanous, 1985). Popovich and Wanous (1982) highlighted the role of realistic job
previews in deflating new employees’ expectations, which aligns with the focus of this study on the perceived accuracy of realistic job preview. Additionally, Rynes (1991) proposed that the realistic job preview can reduce job candidates’ initial high expectations, leading to increased job satisfaction. These perspectives further support the relevance of this study in investigating the relationship between the perceived accuracy of realistic job preview over time and the impact a change in perception has on job related outcomes.

**Affective Organizational Commitment**

Organizational commitment is a crucial aspect of a successful and productive workplace, as it is strongly associated with a range of desirable outcomes, such as employee productivity (Meyer & Allen, 1991). In general, when employees are committed to their work, they are more likely to be engaged, motivated, and productive, which can have a positive impact on the overall performance of the organization (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981). Employees who are committed to their work (in the right ways) tend to be more productive and efficient, as they are motivated to do their best and contribute to the success of the organization.

Meyer and Allen’s (1991) three-component model of commitment, which includes affective, continuance, and normative commitment, has been widely used to understand the nature and predictors of commitment in the workplace. According to Meyer and Allen, affective commitment refers to an employee’s emotional attachment to an organization, normative to an employee’s beliefs about the obligations to stay with an organization, and continuance to an employee’s perception of the costs associated with leaving the organization. While affective and normative commitment tend to have positive outcomes – with research often suggesting that when it comes to commitment it
is most important to foster affective commitment (e.g., Kim & Leach, 2020) – continuance can have negative outcomes if employees stay in their jobs primarily because of the perceived costs associated with leaving. Given previous research findings highlighting the importance of affective commitment, in the current study I focus on the association between perceptions of the realistic job preview and affective organizational commitment.

Affective commitment can be influenced by the realistic job preview in a few ways. First, by providing accurate and honest information about the job and organization, employers can build trust with new employees and foster a sense of caring and reciprocity. Further, employees who perceive the realistic job preview as accurate and honest tend to have stronger feelings of commitment to their employer (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981; Fisher et al., 1979; Ganzach et al., 2002; Meglino et al., 1993; Hom et al., 1998; Irving & Meyer, 1999).

**Work-Life Balance**

Work-life balance refers to the relationship between work and non-work aspects of individuals’ lives (e.g., Greenhaus et al., 2003; Haar, 2014; Voydanoff, 2005); It involves the ability to effectively manage one’s work and personal responsibilities in a way that allows for fulfillment and satisfaction in both aspects of life. When employees experience balance between their work and personal lives, they are more likely to feel fulfilled in their job, which can lead to increased motivation and productivity (Haar, 2014), along with improved quality of life and personal well-being (e.g., Greenhaus et al., 2003). In contrast, conflict between work and life domains has been linked to worker distress, depression, burnout, and lower life satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000; Frone et al., 1992),
Connecting the work and life spheres is an important factor for organizations to consider when communicating realistic job previews for new candidates. Employees who are not provided with accurate information with regards to work and life may ultimately feel less balance between the two, while employees who are exposed to accurate information may develop realistic expectations about their future in both work and life outside of work contexts (e.g., Allen et al., 2000; Michel et al., 2011; Dikkers & Geurts, 2017; Netemeyer et al., 1996). Overall, gaining accurate information early about job and life challenges that employees may face allows them to prepare for the future in particular ways, and encourages the development of coping skills that could lead to greater work-life balance (Allen et al., 2000; Ernst et al., 1998; Michel et al., 2011; Netemeyer et al., 1996).

**Turnover Intentions**

Turnover intentions refer to an individual’s self-reported likelihood (or intention) to leave their current job or organization (Hom, & Griffeth, 1995). Turnover intentions are important because they are positively associated with actual workplace turnover; those who intend to leave are more likely to ultimately leave the organization (e.g., Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). Thus when turnover intentions are high, employee turnover is likely to be high as well.

Research strongly supports a relation between realistic job previews and turnover intentions, which is important because when employees intend to leave, it increases the likelihood of them following through with this intention (Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016). High turnover intentions are often indicative of employees actively pursuing opportunities outside the organization, including job hunting, submitting applications, and attending interviews; conversely, employees with low turnover intentions tend to exhibit greater
commitment and loyalty to their current job and organization (Hom et al., 2012; Mitchell et al., 2001). Quirindongo-Cruz (2016) found a significant relationship between the realistic job preview and later employee turnover, while Meglino and DeNisi (1987) purported the use of realistic job preview as a technique that can efficiently support the retention of employees. By understanding and addressing employees’ turnover intentions, organizations can take proactive steps to mitigate actual turnover and high turnover rates (Lee & Mitchell, 1994).

The theory of met expectations (Dilla, 1987; Greenhaus et al., 1983) suggests that the use of realistic job previews leads to a reduction in employee turnover. Rynes (1991) proposed that realistic job previews that are perceived to be accurate may help in managing employee expectations, which in turn, could potentially decrease levels of turnover. By providing job candidates with an accurate portrayal of the job and its requirements, employees will have a clear understanding of job demands and are less likely to have unrealistic expectations or misunderstandings, leading to a lower likelihood of turnover intentions and turnover itself (Rynes, 1991). Further, the self-selection theory suggests that when a new hire perceives that the information shared is realistic, it may positively influence the length of time an individual stays with the organization (Rynes, 1991). Overall, realistic job previews can lead to reduced employee turnover intentions by managing employee expectations, attracting individuals who are a good fit for the job and the organization, and improving the quality of the psychological contract between the employee and the organization.

**Psychological Contract Theory**

The current research focuses on the association between changes in the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview and job satisfaction, affective organizational
commitment, work-life balance and turnover intentions, and is guided by psychological contract theory (see Conway & Briner, 2020; Rousseau, 1995). The notion of an employer-employee psychological contract has been in existence for over 50 years and is considered an important tool for understanding the employment relationship and workplace attitudes (Conway & Briner, 2005; Conway & Briner, 2020; Wang et al., 2019). This well-established framework aids in understanding the complex relationship between organizations and employees, and is defined as “individual beliefs, shaped by the organization, regarding terms of an exchange agreement between individuals and their organization” (Rousseau, 1995; p.9). According to this theory, a psychological contract represents an unwritten and implicit agreement between employees and organizations regarding their mutual expectations, obligations, and responsibilities (Conway & Briner, 2020; Rousseau, 2004). The psychological contract encompasses common expectations, beliefs and obligations of employers including job security, fair treatment, and a positive work environment. In return, employees are expected to contribute to the success of the organization by working productively, demonstrating loyalty, and following organizational policies and procedures (Rousseau, 1995).

De Cuyper et al. (2012) found that when employees have relational psychological contracts with their employers, which are focused on mutual trust and loyalty, outcomes are more likely to be positive. When psychological contracts are transactional (i.e., focused on tangible rewards and benefits), negative outcomes are more likely (De Cuyper et al., 2012). Suazo and Stone (2021) found that effective communication and management of the psychological contract is important. This can be accomplished through transparent communication during the realistic job preview that clearly conveys
expectations and obligations, and through consistent management of the psychological contract (Cable & DeRue, 2002, Conway & Briner, 2020; Riketta & Van Dick, 2005).

The psychological contract is often interchangeable with the idea of promises but must be grounded in the employee’s perceptions (Rousseau & McLean Parks, 1993; Tekleab et al., 2005). Wang et al. (2019) emphasized the significance of fulfilling the psychological contract; their research suggests that changes in the perceptions of the realistic job preview over time is a critical factor in determining attitudinal outcomes. Thus, if a realistic job preview is perceived of as less accurate over time (i.e., changing over time to be perceived of as a less accurate depiction of the job than initially believed) it may indicate to employees that the psychological contract was not met, resulting in subsequent negative personal and work outcomes, including job attitudes. Conversely, if the change in perception is positive, it suggests that the psychological contract was fulfilled, resulting in positive outcomes. Overall, when employee’s perceive that their expectations are met as understood via the psychological contract, they tend to experience positive outcomes; alternatively, when psychological contract breach occurs, employee work attitudes are negatively affected (Iverson & Buttigieg, 1999; Liu et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2015).

In the context of perceived realistic job preview, when employees perceive a misalignment between what they were promised or expected from the job preview and their actual experiences, it can result in a sense of disillusionment and less positive job and organizational outcomes (Zhao et al., 2015). More specifically, this misalignment can have detrimental effects on employee outcomes, including employee attitudes (Robinson & Morrison, 1995). Alternatively, when there is alignment between perception and reality, employee outcomes are reflected more positively (Zhao et al., 2015). It is
essential for employers to uphold their end of the psychological contract, and one way that employers can achieve this is by providing an accurate realistic job preview that remains accurate over time (Liu et al., 2018).

Overall, previous research highlights the significance of the psychological contract in shaping employee attitudes and behaviours in the workplace. Thus, in line with psychological contract theory, I argue that when perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview change over time, there will be implications for work attitudes. More specifically, when perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview provided at the time of hire decreases over time, job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, and work-family balance will decrease, while turnover intentions will increase. When employees experience a shift in their perceptions, moving from an initial perception of some degree of accuracy to a perception of decreasing accuracy, it can have significant consequences (Erdogan et al., 2004). Employees may feel that the initial promises made during the recruitment process were not fulfilled, resulting in a sense of dissatisfaction with their job and overall work experience (e.g., Erdogan et al., 2004), along with a decrease in their affective commitment to the organization (e.g., Zhao et al., 2015). Further, in these situations employees may experience challenges in managing their work and personal life responsibilities when their initial expectations were not met (e.g., Allen et al., 2000), and be more likely to think about leaving their job (e.g., Raja et al., 2004).

**Current Research**

Previous research suggests that employees’ perceptions of their jobs have a significant association with attitudes towards their work (Cable & Turban, 2001), and moreover, that realistic job previews are related to employee attitudes (Rynes et al., 1991;
Wanous & Hudy, 2001). In this research, based on the realistic job preview presented during the time of hiring, I examine the relationship between change in the perceived accuracy of realistic job previews at job entry (time 1) and approximately one year later (time 2), and job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance, and turnover intentions of employees at time 2. Thus, based on previous research and in line with psychological contract theory I hypothesize the following (see Figure 1 for proposed relationships):

**Hypothesis 1:** Change in perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview between time 1 and time 2, whereby the realistic job preview is perceived of as more inaccurate at time 2 as compared to time 1, will be negatively associated with job satisfaction at time 2.

**Hypothesis 2:** Change in perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview between time 1 and time 2, whereby the realistic job preview is perceived of as more inaccurate at time 2 as compared to time 1, will be negatively associated with affective organizational commitment at time 2.

**Hypothesis 3:** Change in perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview between time 1 and time 2, whereby the realistic job preview is perceived of as more inaccurate at time 2 as compared to time 1, will be negatively associated with work-life balance at time 2.

**Hypothesis 4:** Change in perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview between time 1 and time 2, whereby the realistic job preview is perceived of as more inaccurate at time 2 as compared to time 1, will be positively associated with turnover intentions at time 2.

**Control Variables**

Although I am focusing on the association between perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview and attitudinal outcomes, there are other factors that are associated with attitudinal outcomes that need to be controlled because of their demonstrated relationship to the variables of interest in this study. The following control variables have been identified to help ensure that any observed relationship between perceived accuracy
of the realistic job preview and job outcomes is not due to potential confounding factors specific to the variables of interest, and the current participants.

The environment that individuals work in (i.e., military workplace setting; air, land or sea), and gender may result in different experiences and expectations. Controlling for these variables can help ensure any observed relationship between perceived realistic job previews and job outcomes is not due to differences associated with these characteristics (Bartone & Johnsen, 2008; Oakley et al., 2020; Ramos et al., 2021; Skomorovsky et al., 2019). Moreover, participants of different ages may have different needs and preferences in the military, thus controlling for age can help ensure that any observed relationship between perceived realistic job preview and job outcomes is not due to age differences across participants (Ramos et al., 2021). Some research has found that official language proficiency can result in differences in workplace attitudes, and thus this will also be controlled for and participants will have the ability to participate in the research in their preferred language (National Defence and the Canadian Armed Forces, 2017). Finally, marital status may impact job outcomes and expectations in the CAF as married personnel may have different priorities outside of work (Bartone & Johnsen, 2008; Skomorovsky et al., 2019). Similarly, military personnel with different levels of education may have different job expectations and experiences. Thus, controlling for marital status and education can help isolate the effect of perceived realistic job previews on job outcomes (Ramos et al., 2021).
Figure 1.

Proposed Relationships between Change in Perceptions of the Accuracy of the Realistic Job Preview Over Time and Job Satisfaction, Affective Organizational Commitment, Work-Life Balance and Turnover Intentions

Change in Perceptions of Accuracy of the Realistic Job Preview from time 1 to time 2

- Job Satisfaction
- Affective Commitment
- Work-Life Balance
- Turnover intentions

Time 2
Method

The study was conducted using a portion of the Project Horizon longitudinal data set (2016), obtained through a data sharing agreement with the Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis unit of the CAF. Project Horizon was designed to gain a better understanding of attrition and followed CAF recruits through the early stages of their career and into the formative CAF experiences with the goal of predicting retention and early attrition intentions (Laplante et al., 2015).

Procedure

The current research includes both quantitative and qualitative data collected from online surveys (see Appendix B for the survey questions pertaining to the current research1), administered to CAF members over a twelve-month lag. The selection of time points was based on a combination of meaningful milestones in the career of a recruit as well as chronological time points.

Time 1 measurement (i.e., demographic information and perceived accuracy of realistic job previews) uses data collected by electronic survey during the final week of basic training (i.e., an 11-week intensive program designed to teach new recruits the skills, knowledge, and discipline they need to become effective members of the military). This data was collected from the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School during the final week of basic training. This stage of the training process is relatively homogenous among new recruits and acts as an anchor to bring participants back to a similar comparison point. However, because the training process becomes increasingly

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1 Please note that data was collected between September 2014 and August 2016 as part of a larger survey, with multiple time points (Project Horizon). This study will focus on a subset of variables from the data collection at two time points.
heterogeneous after basic training, the second time point was selected based on the passage of time (Laplante et al., 2015).

At time 2, perceived accuracy of realistic job previews was measured again, along with the attitudinal outcome variables (i.e., job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance, and turnover intentions). The selection of this time point was primarily based on the data set from Project Horizon, which indicated a significant number of voluntary releases, particularly among early-career personnel, happening within the first few months following basic training (Laplante et al., 2015). Open-ended comments (at time 2) related to the questionnaire question, “What do you know now that you wish you had known prior to selecting this occupation?” will be examined in an effort to contribute to the understanding of how job attitudes could have been influenced by the timing of various job information.

Schoemann et al. (2017) offer guidance and a step-by-step procedure for conducting a Monte Carlo power analysis. A power analysis was conducted for the current study and found that at least 177 participants are needed for the study to have 80% power, while 437 participants are needed for 95% power across the different pathways to be examined. Thus, this study has sufficient power given the total of 980 participants with the appropriately linked data.

**Participants**

Participants are voluntary CAF recruits who were tracked using their service number throughout the study (i.e., a number assigned to them at the time of enrollment and remains with the member throughout their military career). To safeguard their identity the service number was replaced by a linked participant code. Participants were invited to complete the survey via email request, immediately after basic training for time
1, and at approximately one year of service for time 2. The study collected demographic data from participants to gain a comprehensive understanding of their characteristics and ensure a representative sample. The sample consisted of a total of 1,008 participants, with valid data available for 980 participants across all demographic variables.

To ensure participant anonymity, age ranges rather than specific ages were provided. The participants were categorized into the following age ranges; 20 and under: 138 participants (13.7%), 21 to 25: 347 participants (34.4%), 26 to 30: 277 participants (27.5%), 31 to 35: 98 participants (9.7%), 36 and over: 117 participants (11.6%). Out of the 980 participants, 721 (71.5%) identified as male, while 259 (25.7%) identified as female. The participants’ education levels were categorized as follows; Some high school: 15 participants (1.5%), High school graduate (including GED): 206 participants (20.4%), Trade certificate: 49 participants (4.9%), Some college (including CEGEP): 86 participants (8.5%), College graduate (including CEGEP): 138 participants (13.7%), Some university: 144 participants (14.3%), Undergraduate degree: 244 participants (24.2%), Graduate degree courses: 23 participants (2.3%), Graduate degree: 76 participants (7.5%).

Participants were asked to indicate their preferred questionnaire language, with the options being English or French. Among participants, 87.3% indicated English as their preferred language, while 12.7% preferred to respond to the questionnaire in French. Participants were asked to indicate their marital status, and the responses were categorized into three groups whereby 34.4% reported being married, in a common-law relationship, or having a partner, while the majority of participants, 63.6%, indicated that they were single. A smaller proportion of participants, 1.9%, reported being separated or divorced.
Measures

Participants were asked to complete online surveys at various time points. For the purposes of the current research, data included information collected at time 1 and time 2 as follows: employee’s perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview (time 1 and time 2), demographic information including environment, gender, age groups, official language, marital status and education (time 1), job satisfaction (time 2), affective organizational commitment (time 2), work-life balance (time 2), and turnover intentions (time 2).

Realistic Job Preview Resources

In the current research, employee perceptions of the accuracy of information received from the realistic job preview is based on official online brochures and videos provided by the CAF to new recruits during the recruitment phase (see Appendix A for examples of materials). There are a number of resources available to new recruits interested in applying to the CAF (e.g., recruiters, current military members, military career counselors). However, for the purposes of this research I selected three standardized realistic job preview resources to ensure consistency across participants. The first resource is the CAF website where there is an abundance of information relating to career opportunities, training expectations, benefits and compensation. The second resource is the online brochures. These are available via the website or at the CAF Recruiting Centre and provide information on the specific occupations, posting expectations, and training timelines associated with a career in the CAF. The third resource was the occupational videos narrated by CAF members; these videos cover the same information as the brochures in video format.
**Perceived Accuracy of the Realistic Job Preview** was assessed at both time 1 and time 2 using three items adapted from LeBlanc et al. (2012) that asked respondents to indicate the extent to which the CAF website, official brochures, and occupation specific videos depicted a realistic picture of the organization. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement for the accuracy of the information on a scale of 1 = completely unrealistic to 5 = completely realistic. The perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview score at each time point was created by recoding responses so that higher scores were reflective of higher inaccuracy and then summing the scores on the three items. To assess change over time, the score on the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview at time 1 was subtracted from the score on the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview at time 2.

**Job Satisfaction** was measured using three items designed to assess one’s satisfaction with their job (Eren & Budgell, 2015). Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement towards items such as “All in all, I am satisfied with my job” and “In general, I don’t like my job” using a response scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.

**Affective Organizational Commitment** was measured using the six affective organizational commitment items from Meyer et al.’s (1993) scale, reworded to apply to the current CAF organizational context. Respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with items such as “I really feel as if the CAF’s problems are my own,” and “I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in the CAF”. Respondents were asked to indicate their level of agreement for each item on a scale of 1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree.
Work-Life Balance was assessed using three items designed to assess the degree to which employees felt that they were able to balance their work and family (Eren & Budgell, 2015). Using a response scale ranging from 1 = completely dissatisfied to 6 = completely satisfied, participants were asked to indicate their level of satisfaction on items that included “Effects my training/career has on my family,” and “Effects my training/career has on my personal relationships”.

Turnover Intentions was measured with 10 items (e.g., “I intend to leave the CAF when I complete my terms of service,” and “I intend to stay in the CAF until compulsory retirement age, if I can”); Eren & Budgell, 2015). Participants were asked to provide their level of agreement on a 6-point scale with response options ranging from 1 = definitely not to 5 = definitely yes.

Open Ended Comments

At time 2, participants were provided an open-ended prompt inviting them to comment and provide any thoughts related to what they know now that they wish they had known prior to selecting their occupation; specifically participants were asked to provide any comments they wished in reply to the question “What do you know now that you wish you had known prior to selecting this occupation?” The qualitative data was collected to capture the attitudes and perspectives of CAF members. These comments were not guided by pre-existing themes or categories, allowing for a more exploratory analysis. The goal was to enhance the robustness of the research by including qualitative insights that could further illuminate the experiences and interpretations of CAF members. Thematic analysis is a widely used approach to analyzing qualitative data, allowing themes to emerge naturally from the data without preconceived notions or biases (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Braun & Clarke, 2006).
Although thematic analysis provides the researcher with great flexibility, Braun and Clarke (2006) provided guidance on a systematic breakdown of the qualitative analysis involving six essential phases. First, researchers familiarize themselves with the data by immersing in the content to gain a deep understanding of the material. Next, they generate initial codes, creating labels to categorize meaningful data segments. Searching for themes is the subsequent step, where researchers identify overarching themes by collating similar codes and patterns. Once the themes are identified, they undergo review and refinement to ensure accuracy and alignment with the research objectives. Researchers then define and name each theme to provide a coherent representation of the data. Finally, the findings and interpretations are synthesized and presented in a comprehensive report, allowing for a thorough understanding of the underlying patterns and insights from the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Following Braun and Clarke’s (2006) template, I became familiar with the data by reading and re-reading it to gain a deep understanding of the content. I took notes and made initial impressions based on my reading of the data. Next, I began coding the data by assigning labels to different sections of the text that related to particular concepts or ideas. I used manual coding to ensure that I remained open to new and unexpected themes that may emerge. After coding, I generated initial themes by grouping together related codes and identifying the patterns that emerged. I used mind mapping to help identify themes and sub-themes and visualize the relationships between them. As I continued to generate ideas, I added more branches and sub-branches to the mind map, connecting them to the relevant sub-theme using lines. Mind mapping is described as a valuable tool for generating and organizing ideas, brainstorming, problem-solving, and note-taking (e.g., Braun & Clarke, 2006). It allows the researcher to explore ideas and
connections without being constrained by linear traditional thinking. It is important to remain open to new ideas throughout the process of mind mapping and be willing to revise and refine the mind map as themes organically emerge (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

**Researcher Reflexivity.** As the researcher conducting a study on the importance of realistic job previews, it is important to acknowledge my personal connection to this topic and how it has influenced my research (see Braun & Clarke, 2006). As outlined earlier, I have experienced the negative consequences of receiving inconsistent information during a realistic job preview. This personal experience has driven my passion to explore the topic of realistic job previews and to investigate ways to prevent others from facing the same challenges. I am aware that my personal biases and experiences may influence my analysis, and interpretation. Therefore, I plan to approach this research with a reflective and critical mindset, and to acknowledge and address any potential biases that may arise. By being transparent about my personal connection to the topic and reflecting on my biases, I hope to enhance the validity of my research and to produce meaningful findings that can inform military recruitment practices as well as other similar organizations.

**Results**

**Quantitative Analysis**

Before proceeding with the study hypotheses, the data was screened for outliers and correlations between variables were assessed. Assumptions for linear regression analyses were also examined, such as assessment of data normality and outliers (Field, 2016). To identify potential outliers, all variables were standardized, and although minor deviations were observed, all participants were included in further analyses due to the large, and absence of outliers in other measures (e.g., Field, 2016). Following the
examination of outliers, the normality of the data was assessed and skewness and kurtosis for all variables was not problematic.

Pearson’s r was interpreted using general guidelines, where 0.1, 0.3, and 0.5 corresponded to small, medium, and large effects respectively (Field, 2016). As shown in table 1, the correlation analysis examined the relationship between changes in perceptions of the realistic job preview and the attitudinal outcomes, including job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance, and turnover intentions. The results revealed several significant correlations between these variables, all of which were in the expected directions. Change in perceptions of the realistic job preview showed a negative correlation with job satisfaction ($r = -.20, p < .01$), affective organizational commitment ($r = -.15, p < .05$), work-life balance ($r = -.26, p < .01$) and a positive correlation with turnover intentions ($r = .14, p < .05$). Job satisfaction was positively correlated with affective organizational commitment ($r = .61, p < .01$), and work-life balance ($r = .46, p < .01$), and a negatively correlated with turnover intentions ($r = -.49, p < .01$). Affective organization commitment showed a significant positive correlation with work-life balance ($r = .41, p < .05$) and a negative correlation with turnover intentions ($r = -.58, p < .01$). Work-life balance showed a negative correlation with turnover intentions ($r = -.33, p < .01$).
### Table 1

**Correlation Analyses for the Main Study Variables**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<td>.41**</td>
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<td>-.58**</td>
<td>-.33**</td>
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<td>.00</td>
<td>-.09*</td>
<td>.13**</td>
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<td>.03</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>.07*</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-.09</td>
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<td>-.05</td>
<td>.15**</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Notes.* Scale reliabilities are displayed on the diagonal where applicable;

*p < .05, **p < .01;

RJP Change = Change in Perceptions of the Realistic Job Preview Over Time; Job Sat = Job Satisfaction; Org Com = Affective Organizational Commitment; WLB = Work-Life Balance; Turn Int = Turnover Intentions; Gender: 1 = male, 2 = female; Age: 1 = 20 and under, 2 = 21-25, 3 = 31-35, and 4 = 36 and over; Education: 1 = some high school, 2 = high school graduate (including GED), 3 = trade certificate, 4 = some college (including CEGEP), 5 = college graduate (including CEGEP), 6 = some university, 7 = undergraduate degree, 8 = graduate degree courses, 9 = graduate degree; Language: English = 1, French = 2.
A series of hierarchical regression analyses were conducted to examine the association between change in perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview and job satisfaction, affective commitment, work-life balance and turnover intentions. For all analyses, the control variables (i.e., environment, gender, age ranges, official languages, marital status, and education) were added on the first step, while change in perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview was added on the second step.

In support of the hypotheses, when the realistic job preview was perceived of as more inaccurate at time 2 as compared to time 1 (i.e., as perceptions of inaccuracy increased), job satisfaction, commitment, and work-life balance went down, while turnover intentions increased. More specifically, in support of hypothesis 1, the results show that an increase in perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview was negatively associated with job satisfaction ($\beta = -.17, p < .01$), accounting for 3% of the variance (see Table 2). In support of hypothesis 2, the results show that an increase in perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview was negatively associated with affective commitment ($\beta = -.16, p < .05$), accounting for 2% of the variance (see Table 3). In support of hypothesis 3, the results show that an increase in perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview was negatively associated with work-life balance ($\beta = -.27, p < .01$), accounting for 7% of the variance (see Table 4). Finally, in support of hypothesis 4, an increase in perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview was positively associated with turnover intentions ($\beta = .14, p < .05$), accounting for 2% of the variance (see Table 5).
Table 2

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Effect of Change in Perceptions of the Realistic Job Preview on Job Satisfaction*

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Step</th>
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<th>Sig</th>
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<tr>
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<td>R²=.05</td>
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Table 3

*Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Effect of Change in Perceptions of the Realistic Job Preview on Affective Organizational Commitment.*

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<th>Step</th>
<th>Variable</th>
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<th>β</th>
<th>Sig</th>
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<td>n.s.</td>
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<td>n.s.</td>
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<td>-.16</td>
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### Table 4

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Effect of Change in Perceptions of the Realistic Job Preview on Work-Life Balance.

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<th>Confidence Interval Upper</th>
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\[ R^2 = .02 \quad \Delta R^2 = .02 \]

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\[ R^2 = .09 \quad \Delta R^2 = .07 \]

### Table 5

Hierarchical Regression Analysis for the Effect of Change in Perceptions of the Realistic Job Preview on Turnover Intentions.

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\[ R^2 = .03 \quad \Delta R^2 = .03 \]

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\[ R^2 = .05 \quad \Delta R^2 = .02 \]
Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative comments were captured approximately 1 year after hire (time 2) allowing the participants time to experience the training environment and job responsibilities within their occupation. Participants provided 357 comments in both official languages, with 66 (18.5%) replying in French, and 291 (81.5%) in English. A range of comments were provided reflecting their experiences, concerns, and insights on the question “what do you know now that you wish you had known prior to selecting this occupation?”. My analysis revealed three main themes: (1) misalignment between training expectations and reality, (2) inadequate information on job tasks and responsibilities, and (3) impact on personal life and career progression. These themes provide valuable insights into the perception of realistic job previews and their influence on employees’ subsequent attitudinal outcomes.

Misalignment Between Training Expectations and Reality

This theme emphasizes that participants wished they knew about the importance of the quality and relevance of training provided to military personnel when they began their career. The theme was broken into sub-themes: (a) delays in training, (b) language barriers, and (c) lack of information provided.

Some informants identified delays in training as an area they wish they had known about prior to enrollment.

About the delays in the training system.

I wish I had known there is a lot of downtime between training.

How drawn out the training schedule is and the waiting time to get into the hospital to complete CPT training.

That I would be waiting quite a while to be trained.
Other informants identified language barrier as a concern.

*That the training was 100% in English*

*Savoir que tout le travail était en anglais. [Knowing that all the work was in English.]*

*Ayant choisi un métier dans la marine, j’aurais aimé savoir que mon cours de métier se donne uniquement en anglais. J’ai reçu cette information uniquement à la fin de mon Q.M.B. [Having chosen a career in the navy, I would have liked to know that my trade course is only given in English. I received this information only at the end of my B.M.Q.]*

There were also a number of comments indicating some members believed insufficient information about training was provided.

*“Prior experience, even a little familiarization, would be ideal prior to the first phase of training.”*

*How long it would take to get on my course. Also how long my course actually is when compared to the Canadian Armed Forces website.*

**Inadequate Information on Job Tasks and Responsibilities**

This theme concentrates on military personnel’s daily experiences in their roles and the organizational support they receive. Informants mentioned wishing they knew more about issues like insufficient information about the specific job task and responsibilities during recruitment.

*I wish I had known more about what the job entails. Although it is too soon for me to know what my current position involves as I have just entered into my first real unit.*

*That my occupation as an operator is essentially a manual labour position. That I don’t get paid overtime.*

Some informants even stated they felt misled by the information they were provided.
I wish I had been given a more accurate description of the job and the lifestyle. I chose ACISS because I wanted to work with computers and networks. I was never told I would be spending this much time in the field or doing ACISS core work. Had I known that I would have chosen ATIS instead.

Originally it was communicated to me that my QL3 course would be 6 months long; it wasn’t until arriving in Esquimalt that I learned it was 9 months. That my occupation is being scraped and being amalgamated with 2 other professions, thus causing much despair and anger in my profession.

**Impact on Personal Life and Career Progression**

The third theme captures informants’ concerns over work-life balance and career trajectories. They expressed frustration about not knowing earlier about separations from family and home, making it difficult to form meaningful relationships. They highlighted the unpredictable scheduling and frequent reassignments, leading to an unstable and challenging work-life balance and dissatisfaction with their chosen occupations.

*That we would be constantly pulled away from our families and homes for little to no reason on a constant basis to the point where it is difficult to forge new meaningful relationships.*

*How much people in the trade get tossed around to fill spots on sailing ships so we have no solid schedule at all, and people purposely fail out of some of their courses so they won’t get screwed over by having that qualification.*

Other comments addressing the issue of what participants wished they knew at the beginning of their careers focused on career progression and the difference between members perception versus reality.

*I would have liked to know that being ACISS “Core” was mandatory for several months/years before choosing a sub-occupation.*

*I wish I had known about my acceptance into a civil engineering course so I could have chosen an occupation related to that degree and received support from the CAF.*
Originally it was communicated to me that my QL3 course would be 6 months long; it wasn’t until arriving in Esquimalt that I learned it was 9 months. That my occupation is being scrapped and being amalgamated with 2 other professions thus causing much despair and anger in my profession.

**Discussion**

While research exploring the association between the realistic job preview and employee outcomes is widespread, limited research remains in some areas. The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which changes in perceptions of the realistic job preview are associated with job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance, and turnover intentions. The findings have the potential to expand our understanding of the implications associated with realistic job previews, and in turn the practice of providing a realistic job preview, and are discussed in more detail below.

**Quantitative findings**

I hypothesized that there would be an association between perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview and job satisfaction (hypothesis 1), affective organizational commitment (hypothesis 2), work-life balance (hypothesis 3), and turnover intentions (hypothesis 4). More specifically, when the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview was perceived of as more inaccurate at time 2 as compared to time 1, job satisfaction would be lower, affective organizational commitment would be lower, work-life balance would be lower, and turnover intentions would be higher. Overall, in support of all four hypotheses, and after controlling for environment, age range, gender, official languages, marital status and education, the findings indicated that there were significant associations between the perceptions of the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview over time and the attitudinal outcomes.
The relationship between perceptions of the realistic job preview at time 1 and time 2 reflects the change in employees’ perceptions of the accuracy of their experienced realistic job preview over the course of their employment. These findings suggest that when employees experience a mismatch between their initial expectations set by the realistic job preview in that it is perceived of as more inaccurate over time, it can lead to negative attitudinal outcomes, as has been suggested by previous research (e.g., Phillips, 1998; Wang et al., 2019; Zhao et al., 2015). Thus, in alignment with previous research where emphasis is placed on the importance of accurate job information, and also in support of the importance of fulfilling psychological contract expectations (e.g., Rousseau, 1995), this study provides support for the notion that perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview is associated with an employee’s attitudinal outcomes.

The findings indicated that change in perceptions of the realistic job preview was associated with job satisfaction in that when the realistic job preview was perceived of as more inaccurate over time, job satisfaction was lower. The outcome supports the idea that job expectations resulting from a more inaccurate job preview, lead to less alignment between expectations and actual job experiences, ultimately decreasing satisfaction.

Previous studies have also highlighted the importance of realistic job information in shaping employees’ satisfaction levels (Bashir et al., 2016; Popovich & Wanous, 1982; Rynes, 1991). It is important to note that in terms of gender, the findings indicate that there are differences in job satisfaction levels between males and female employees. This suggests organizations should be mindful of potential gender-related factors and consider implementing strategies to address any disparities. The findings also revealed a significant relationship between education and job satisfaction. Judge et al. (2010) found that employees with higher levels of education exhibited higher levels of job satisfaction.
compared to those with lower levels of education. This suggests the importance of providing opportunities for continuous learning and career development. By considering both gender and education as factors influencing job satisfaction, organizations can take targeted action to create a work environment that meets the diverse needs of their employees.

Regarding affective organizational commitment, my results indicate that change in perceptions of realistic job preview accuracy is negatively associated with affective organizational commitment. This finding is consistent with previous research emphasizing the significance of accurate job information in fostering employees’ commitment to the organization (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981; Ganzach et al., 2002; Irving & Meyer, 1999; Liu et al., 2018). When employees’ have realistic expectations about their job and the organization fulfills those expectations, it enhances their commitment (Liu et al., 2018), whereas when employees feel that they have not been provided with accurate information commitment may be reduced. Employee commitment is important for many reasons, but also because it plays a crucial role in employee engagement, motivation, and productivity (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981). Meyer and Allen’s (1991) three-component model of commitment, encompassing affective, continuance and normative commitment, has been widely used to understand commitment in the workplace. In this study, I focused on the relationship between perceptions of the realistic job preview and affective organizational commitment. Fostering affective commitment in employees is often discussed as most crucial among the three types as it is associated with numerous positive personal and organizational outcomes (e.g., Kim & Leach, 2020). The findings in my study suggest that when employees feel that they were not provided with realistic and
truthful information about the job, it may lead to decreased affective commitment among employees.

In terms of work-life balance, my hypothesis is supported with findings that suggest that when individuals perceive an increase in the inaccuracy of the realistic job preview, work-life balance is lower. This also aligns with previous research emphasising the importance of accurate job information in facilitating work-life balance (O’Brien et al., 2015). When employees have a clearer understanding of their job expectations due to a more accurate job preview, they can make informed decisions and better manage their personal and professional lives, resulting in improved work-life balance (O’Brien et al., 2015). Alternatively, when employees feel that they were not provided with realistic and truthful information about the job it may reduce work-life balance. By providing accurate information about job demands and potential challenges in the work and personal life domains, organizations can help employees develop realistic expectations and acquire coping skills leading to an improved work-life balance (Allen et al., 2000; Dikkers & Geurts, 2017; Michel et al., 2011). My study suggests that changes in the perception of the accuracy of the realistic job preview over time is associated with less work-life balance.

Lastly, my study examined the relationship between the accuracy of perceived realistic job preview and turnover intentions. In line with my hypothesis, the results indicated that an increase in perceived job preview inaccuracy over time is associated with an increase in turnover intentions. This finding underscores the significance of providing accurate and realistic job information to employees to mitigate the desire to leave and improve employee retention. It aligns with previous research emphasizing the impact of job preview accuracy on turnover intentions (O’Brien et al., 2015). Accurate
and informative realistic job previews play a crucial role in shaping employees’ turnover intentions. Because high turnover intentions are associated with actual turnover, it is important to reduce turnover intentions in an effort to mitigate employee turnover (Meglino & DeNisi, 1987; Quirindongo-Cruz, 2016; Sandhya & Kumar, 2011). The findings also highlight significant gender difference in turnover intentions among employees, indicating the need for organizations to be attentive to potential gender-related factors. It is important for organizations to recognize any disparities and proactively implement strategies that promote equality and fairness in the workplace. By ensuring that job previews accurately represent the actual job experiences, realistic job previews can help align employees’ expectations with the reality of their job.

It is important to note that gender has played a significant role when it comes to employee attitudes (see Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2000). In the context of realistic job previews, when employees, especially women, encounter change in the perceived accuracy of realistic job previews it may lead to conflicting expectations between their gender roles and demands of their job roles (Eagly & Carli, 2007; Eagly & Heilman, 2008). Organizations should be aware of these dynamics and work towards ensuring that realistic job previews accurately reflect the actual job experiences of employees, to mitigate potential gender bias and promote a fair and inclusive work environment. By understanding gender differences at the beginning of the career, organizations can focus on creating inclusive and supportive work environments for all employees (Bonte & Krabel, 2014).

Overall these findings indicate that when perceptions of the realistic job preview become more inaccurate over time, employee attitudes tend to be affected. The findings
from this study support the hypotheses and suggest that perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview are important in influencing how employees feel about their work.

**Qualitative findings**

The qualitative analysis conducted on the comments provided by study participants at time 2 identified three main themes focused on what participants wish they knew when they began their careers, and can be used to inform the association between the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview and job satisfaction, work-life balance, affective organizational commitment, and turnover intentions in the CAF. The themes are: 1) misalignment between training expectations and reality, 2) inadequate information on job tasks and responsibilities, and 3) impact on personal life and career progression. These themes provide insight into why there may have a change in perception of the accuracy of the realistic job preview over time. As I investigated these themes further, I explored the meanings, assumptions, implications, and how people talk about these aspects of their experiences in the military.

The first theme, *misalignment between training expectations and reality*, highlights the importance of the quality and relevance of training provided to military personnel. CAF participants reported issues related to “*the delays in the training system.*” This is in-line with previous research. A study by Hom et al. (2012) found that the accuracy of job previews, including training expectations, plays a critical role in employees’ decisions to stay or leave an organization. Accurate job previews help employees develop realistic expectations about their training. When the training reality on the job does not match with this expectation, it likely creates a situation whereby employees feel that the realistic job preview was to some extent inaccurate, which in turn can lead to lower job satisfaction, affective commitment, work-life balance, and higher
turnover intentions. Other participants reported issues related to language barriers, downtime between training opportunities, and delays in the training system (e.g., “That the training was 100% in English.”). Some participants faced language barriers in their training or work environment, because they were not expecting training to be completed primarily in English. Other misalignments related to training included “Prior experience, even a little familiarization, would be ideal prior to the first phase of training,” and “I wish I had known there is a lot of downtime between training.”

Overall, this theme of misalignment between training expectations and reality suggests that one of the reasons employees perceive less accuracy in the realistic job preview over time is because they have not been provided with sufficient information when it comes to training. This insufficient information may be perceived of as a breach of the psychological contract, ultimately leading to lower job satisfaction, affective commitment, work-life balance, and higher turnover intentions (Jiang et al., 2017; Wanous et al., 1992). Moreover, when employees do not receive the training they expected or feel was promised, they may feel ill-prepared to perform their job tasks effectively, potentially causing poorer work attitudes (Saks & Haccoun, 2010).

The second theme, inadequate information on job tasks and responsibilities, focuses on the daily experiences of military personnel in their roles and the support they receive from the organization. Participants discussed issues such as lack of information provided during the recruiting period (e.g., “I wish I had known more about what the job entails”). When employees feel ill-informed about their job tasks and responsibilities, they may feel disillusioned and disappointed with the reality of their role, and may further feel that they were not provided with accurate information about their job early in their career. Assumptions underlying this theme include the expectation that military
organizations should provide a supportive work environment and assign roles that align with individuals' interests and abilities. The implications of this theme are that military organizations should focus on improving the work environment, providing support for personnel, and ensuring that roles are assigned based on individual interests and abilities to enhance job satisfaction and retention. Overall, this theme suggests that one of the reasons employees perceive less accuracy in the realistic job preview over time is because they have not been provided with adequate information about the job. This insufficient information may be perceived of as a breach of the psychological contract, ultimately contributing to lower job satisfaction, affective commitment, and work-life balance, and higher turnover intentions.

The third theme, impact on personal life and career progression, explores the participants’ perceptions of their work-life balance and career prospects, including opportunities for advancement, promotions, and the overall satisfaction with their chosen occupations. Participants expressed concerns about the lack of opportunities for advancement, the influence of connections on career progression, and dissatisfaction with their chosen occupations. Participants also identified that the demanding nature of the military jobs and the unpredictable schedules can have significant impacts on personal relationships and overall work-life balance, which is in line with previous research (Liu et al., 2018). Other comments focused on career progression and the difference between members perception versus reality. These comments indicate that employees feel frustrated with the misinformation and constrained in their career progression by the necessity to remain in a role for an extended period of time. They also indicate a lack of alignment with their education and limited opportunities with career progression. This theme suggests that limited opportunities for career growth and dissatisfaction with
chosen occupations can negatively impact job satisfaction, commitment, work-life balance, and intentions to stay in the military (Hom et al., 2017). Assumptions underpinning this theme include the belief that military personnel should have access to equitable opportunities for career growth and advancement. The implications of this theme are that military organizations should focus on providing equal opportunities for career advancement and ensuring that individuals are matched with occupations that align with their interests and skills. Overall, this theme suggests that one of the reasons employees perceive less accuracy in the realistic job preview over time is because they have not been provided with adequate information about how the job will influence their personal lives and career progression. Again, this insufficient information may be perceived of as a breach of the psychological contract, ultimately contributing to lower job attitudes.

Overall, in the context of the military, accurate and comprehensive job previews play a pivotal role in shaping employees’ experiences, and ultimately their attitudinal outcomes. The themes identified in this study suggest that there may be gaps or inaccuracies in the realistic job previews provided, leading to a misalignment between expectations and reality, inadequate understanding of job tasks and responsibilities, and unanticipated impacts on personal life and career progression. These gaps may be interpreted as a perceived breach of the psychological contract (Conway & Briner, 2020) as individuals perceive that their organization has failed to fulfill its obligations or promises.

These themes highlight the critical role of realistic job previews in preventing perceived breaches of the psychological contract. They underscore the need for organizations to provide accurate, comprehensive, and realistic job previews to align
employee expectations with the realities of the job over time, to ultimately improve overall workplace experiences.

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The findings of this study have contributed to psychological contract theory by providing empirical evidence of the role that perceived inaccuracy of the realistic job preview has on employees’ job attitudes. Psychological contract theory emphasizes the importance of fulfilling promises and expectations in employment relationships (Griep et al., 2016), this study supports the notion that a breach of contract is associated with negative employee outcomes. Alternatively, when these expectations are met, it enhances employees’ commitment and job satisfaction (Griep et al., 2016). These findings highlight the importance of managing the psychological contract throughout employees’ tenure in the organization, especially within the first year of employment. By examining change in perceptions of the realistic job preview over time, this study provides evidence to support the notion that it is important for organizations to provide accurate realistic job previews that align with employees’ actual job experiences over time. The research suggests that changes in the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview over time has implications for employees’ job attitudes. It underscores how the perceived accuracy of realistic job previews, as they relate to psychological contract breach, may influence attitudinal outcomes such as job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work-life balance, and turnover intentions. Given the personal and organizational costs associated with negative workplace attitudes, from both a research and practice perspective it is important to understand what may influence employees’ workplace attitudes.

Based on the findings of this study, there are some practical implications that organizations should consider. Firstly, given the context of this research, organizations
should continuously assess and update their realistic job previews to keep them relevant to the evolving demands and available resources of the organization. Regular check-ins with employees, especially those within the first year of service may help identify misalignments between their expectations and actual experiences. Organizations can monitor employees’ perception of the job preview accuracy by conducting quarterly reviews and identifying any gaps between expectations and actual experiences. This ongoing evaluation, coupled with addressing concerns upfront by providing the necessary support, may help mitigate psychological contract breach (Griep et al., 2016).

Organizations should also strive to provide job candidates with more realistic information (both good and bad) about the job and work environment during the recruitment process. By presenting transparent job previews, organizations can help set and foster more realistic expectations for candidates thereby reducing the likelihood of psychological contract breach. Highlighting opportunities for career development, work life balance, and support mechanisms within the organization could be vital in attracting and retaining employees from diverse backgrounds. It is also essential for organizations to adopt an inclusive approach in designing realistic job previews that consider the needs and expectations of underrepresented individuals. By tailoring the realistic job preview to address the specific concerns and aspirations of these groups, organizations can demonstrate its commitment to diversity and inclusion, making the organization more attractive to a wider range of candidates. This can be particularly crucial when aiming to improve diversity in the workplace.

Lastly, organizations should invest in strategies and initiatives that promote positive work experiences, especially those that are promised during the recruiting process. Cameron et al. (2011) described how positive practises adopted in the workplace
bring out the best in employees behaviours. The researchers identified a positive practise scale with six dimensions: Respect, care, support, inspiration, meaning, and forgiveness. By incorporating these practises, organizations can foster a positive work environment, as well as increase job attitudes, and develop strong employment relationships with the ultimate goal of retaining talented, engaged and productive employees (Cameron et al., 2011). These suggestions can help strengthen the psychological contract between organizations and employees. It’s important to understand that the psychological contract is not a one-time, static agreement made during the hiring process, but rather as an ongoing relationship that needs to be nurtured. Organizations can use these research insights as added value to the literature to help enhance an employee’s experience and relationship with their organization to foster more positive job attitudes for many years to come.

**Future Directions**

There are endless research opportunities to continue building on the findings of this study; doing so will contribute to the existing literature and understanding of the realistic job preview and employee attitudes. To begin, conducting comparative studies across different industries and organizations would help identify potential variations with regards to the impact of realistic job previews on job outcomes. This would help guide organizations in tailoring their job previews to their specific industry and target applicants. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies that span past the first year of employment would provide valuable insights into the sustainability of these effects over time. It could be valuable to solicit regular feedback from employees and use the information provided in the feedback to make necessary adjustments to improve any gaps in alignment. These suggestions could help organizations develop practises that can
improve organizational recruitment and retention strategies leading to a more accurate portrayal of the realistic job preview.

Moreover, investigating the underlying mechanisms and factors that mediate or moderate the relationship between realistic job previews and job outcomes would enhance our understanding further. For example, the relationship between realistic job previews and stress has received considerable attention in the literature (e.g., Sun & Critchfield, 2021), with many studies demonstrating the impact of realistic job previews on stress (Dukerich et al., 2002; Hill et al., 2001; Lee et al., 2015). According to Breaugh (1983), realistic job previews can help lower the stress levels of new employees and improve their ability to handle their new job; This is because understanding what the job entails through realistic job previews can reduce stress and improve the employee’s coping mechanisms (e.g., Breaugh, 1983; Wanberg & Schneider, 2000). Thus, exploring the role of stress as a mediator to the relationship between perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview and employee attitudes could be important in improving the understanding of the process by which this relationship occurs.

Additionally, exploring how other outcomes may be influenced by the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview is also worth pursuing. For example behavioural or health outcomes may also be impacted, and providing evidence that additional outcomes are influenced by the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview could provide further impetus to improve the realistic job preview process in all organizations.

**Limitations**

This study is important because it contributes to our understanding of the relationship between perceptions of realistic job previews and job attitudes in the CAF, and more widely in other organizations. However, like all research there are limitations,
and because this is a secondary data analysis, there are certain limitations that could not be avoided. To begin, I did not have control over the selection of scales. Future research could focus on using more widely used scales with demonstrated reliability and validity to determine if these findings replicate across studies using different measures. Another limitation to consider was that applicants were asked to rate how they felt. The self-report method can be problematic as it comes with many possible biases (Paulhus & Vazire, 2007). Future research could incorporate strategies to utilize multiple sources of data to overcome these limitations to some extent.

It is also important to consider that employees who perceived the most realistic job preview inaccuracy may have already left the organization. If this is the case, then the findings could be influenced as their insights and experiences were not captured, potentially limiting the comprehensive representation of perspectives and outcomes. This could impact the depth of understanding of the perceived accuracy of the realistic job preview on employee attitudes. To address this limitation, future research could consider incorporating data from those who have exited the organization to gain a more thorough understanding.

This research was conducted with only one organization and due to the unique nature of employment in the CAF it may not extend to other organizations. Thus future research should strive to replicate this in other organizations. In organizations where there is less change, for example, the findings may be quite different.

Another limitation that is important to highlight is the inconsistency between how the official realistic job preview materials were consumed. Based on the recruiting policy of the CAF, there is no way to determine how much (or how little) the realistic job
preview tools were viewed by each applicant. Future research would benefit by addressing this limitation.

Lastly, while looking at perception is very important and represents the employees’ views, it is not necessarily an accurate depiction of the realistic job preview itself as the results can be very subjective to the individual experience. These findings only highlight the importance of the perception of accuracy and not necessarily the type of information organizations should provide in a realistic job preview.

**Conclusion**

Despite a significant amount of evidence in support of the benefits of realistic job previews, the association between employees’ perceptions of the accuracy of the realistic job preview and employee work attitudes have not been fully examined. Overall, my study contributes to existing knowledge by providing empirical evidence in support of the importance of perceived realistic job preview accuracy in shaping employees’ job satisfaction, affective organizational commitment, work–life balance, and turnover intentions. Organizations can benefit from this study by recognizing the realistic job preview as an essential tool in managing employee attitudes that are crucial to organizational success. By ensuring that the information provided in the realistic job preview accurately represents the job experiences, organizations may be able to enhance job satisfaction, work-life balance, affective organizational commitment, and reduce turnover intentions.
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Appendix A

Example Realistic Job Preview Materials

Canadian Armed Forces website, example brochures and Video transcript.

Personnel Selection Officer Brochure.

MAJOR CHRISTINA EASTWOOD: I’m Major Christina Eastwood from Timmins, Ontario. I’m a Personnel Selection Officer currently serving with the Canadian Forces Recruiting Group Headquarters at CFB Borden, Ontario.

Personnel Selection Officers, or PSOs, are the behavioural science experts in the Canadian Armed Forces. They develop selection standards and processes, leadership development models, and performance appraisal systems. They support the growth and
career progress of military personnel at all ranks, helping to ensure the organization has the right people in the right jobs to fulfill its mandate.

MAJOR CHRISTINA EASTWOOD: Similarly to our counterparts in the civilian sector, which perform HR functions, we are implicated oftentimes in policy, recruitment selection, whether they be internally with our in-service programs, or externally in recruitment such as I am at this time. We also will certainly bring our specialties within certain commands in the Canadian Armed Forces, whether that be Special Operations, the Army, the Air Force or Navy — and enable them not only to develop programs that contribute to the wellness of their people but also to maintaining their operational effectiveness as a whole.

Personnel Selection Officers influence the recruitment of new personnel and optimize the fit and potential of serving members by overseeing the selection processes for various personnel plans and programs. They also work closely with all occupations that require specialized selection.

PSOs may also find themselves in teaching positions.

MAJOR CHRISTINA EASTWOOD: I’ve been afforded the opportunity to teach at the Royal Military College for 4 years. In addition to the Royal Military College, we have our own school system where you can contribute to training and development of personnel in the Canadian Armed Forces.

PSOs also act as social cultural advisors to top commanders in the military, providing insights on human dimensions that support decision-making on military missions.

MAJOR CHRISTINA EASTWOOD: It is our role and responsibility to advise the leadership or the commanders in terms of what are best practices, what are the various options available to them, and what you recommend as a course of action.

Most military operations around the world include specialist behavioural science support, and PSOs can also be deployed to assist in these roles.

For example, they may conduct leader profiling in a foreign nation, or examine the cultural environment for a specific mission.

MAJOR CHRISTINA EASTWOOD: Day in, day out, I get to assist individuals to reach their goals or dreams. At this time, I’m not working on a base, but I’m working in an environment where we’re supporting individual Canadians achieve their goals of becoming members of the Canadian Armed Forces. And that, again, is really rewarding, especially when you can see somebody who first enrolls, and then a number of years later you actually get to encounter them in the Forces — and I get to hear about all the great things they’ve accomplished throughout their career.
Once qualified, PSOs are posted to an Army Base, Air Force Wing or Navy Formation within Canada.

MAJOR CHRISTINA EASTWOOD: They are likely to be posted to a base somewhere across Canada in order to be able to complete a 1-year on-job training program. And this will expose them, and certainly hone their skillsets, in terms of being able to implement and certainly manage not only some of the programs that we have across the Forces but also hone their skills in terms of career counselling with our members.

PSOs in the Reserve Force return to their home units to continue developing their skillsets.

PSOs often work individually; however, they are integrated into the larger military team as part of their advisory roles.

MAJOR CHRISTINA EASTWOOD: I’ve had the opportunities to work on a garrison, I’ve had the opportunities to teach at the College, I have the opportunity now to work within recruiting, and what has been fascinating about each of these opportunities is that each day — and certainly each position — has brought a different challenge. So it has enabled me, as a person, to grow not only in terms of my core competencies and my function, but just overall as a person. And so, that, for me, has been what’s been the big win in terms of my career as a selection officer.

Available Professional Training

Personnel Selection Officers attend the Canadian Forces Training Development Centre in Borden, Ontario. They learn how to conduct interviews, and how to evaluate and counsel individuals concerning military service, military occupational training and employment, special training and employment, resettlement, academic upgrading and orientation. They also learn to conduct Second Career Assistance Workshops and provide career counselling for military members transitioning to the civilian workforce.

Personnel Selection Officers are posted to a base to complete several months of on-the-job training, where they gain experience in the practice, theory, knowledge and skills required of this job under the supervision of a more senior member.

Available Specialty Training

Personnel Selection Officers may be offered the opportunity to develop specialized skills through formal courses and on-the-job training, including:

- Unit Personnel Selection
- Organizational Consulting
ENTRY PLANS

Direct Entry Options

The required education for this position is a Master’s degree in a social science, such as Psychology or Industrial Relations. Other graduate degrees may be considered based on related experience. Consideration will be given to applications who have an undergraduate degree in Psychology.

The ideal candidate will already have a graduate degree, the CAF will decide if your academic program matches the criteria for this job and may place you directly into the required on-the-job training program following basic training.

Foreign education may be accepted.

TRAINING

Basic Military Officer Qualification

After enrolment, you start basic officer training at the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School in Saint-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec, for 12 weeks. Topics covered include general military knowledge, the principles of leadership, regulations and customs of the CAF, basic weapons handling, and first aid. Opportunities will also be provided to apply such newly acquired military skills in training exercises involving force protection, field training, navigation and leadership. A rigorous physical fitness program is also a vital part of basic training. Basic officer training is provided in English or French and successful completion is a prerequisite for further training.

Following basic officer training, official second language training may be offered to you. Training could take from two to nine months to complete depending on your ability in your second language.

Learn more about Basic Training here.
RELATED CAREERS

Health Services Management Officer
Human Resources Administrator
Logistics Officer

PART TIME OPTIONS

Serve with the Reserve Force
Part Time Employment
Reserve Force Training
Reserve Working Environment
Appendix B

Survey Materials

Consent Form for Time 1

(Project Horizon Phase 2 was used for time 1 data.)

A.2 Phase 2 Consent Form

Project Horizon: CAF Early Career Study – Phase 2 Consent Form

What is Project Horizon? Project Horizon: CAF Early Career Study is administered under the direction of the Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPRA). Its goal is to collect information about a variety of factors associated with your early career experiences, your satisfaction with various aspects of training and military life, and your career intentions. This will be achieved through a longitudinal design, that is, the administration of surveys at a few key moments in a CAF member’s early career.

Do I have to participate? As you may recall, Project Horizon was designed to follow numerous platoons through their early career experiences and your platoon is among those invited to participate in this innovative study. Your participation in Project Horizon is completely voluntary and agreement to participate in this second phase of the project in no way constitutes a commitment to participate in subsequent phases of the study.

What will my participation entail? Participation in Project Horizon entails the completion of up to four surveys throughout your first year of service: at the beginning and end of basic military training, 3 months after basic military training and 6 months after that. Today, you are invited to complete the second survey of the study. In this survey, you will be asked a variety of questions about your background, your basic training experiences, your feelings toward the CAF, and your career intentions. It should take approximately 25-30 minutes to complete this survey.

What if I didn’t participate in the first phase of the study? Regardless of your decision to participate or not in the first phase of the study, today you are free to choose whether you would like to participate in the second phase. It is not necessary to participate in the first phases in order to participate in the subsequent phases of Project Horizon. You can join the group of participants at any time.

What if I want to quit at some point in the study? If you volunteer to complete this survey, you will have a choice at every subsequent phase of the study to end your participation; you may withdraw from Project Horizon at any time without suffering any repercussions or consequences to your military career. You may also refuse to answer any questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. If you decide you no longer wish to be part of Project Horizon after you have already provided information, at your request, we will remove your information from consideration before conducting analyses and producing a final report.

How will my information be used? As part of Project Horizon, we would like to link your survey responses to the other phases of the study and to other data sources, in order to enhance our understanding of retention factors. This data linkage also helps us avoid having to ask you the same questions twice (as part of 2 separate studies) and minimizes the burden on you, the survey respondent. Specifically, we would like to match your survey information with DND personnel records containing information from the application and selection process as well as the release process (if applicable), and with some of your responses from another DND endorsed survey that you may have completed earlier in your training at CFLRS (namely, the Recruit Health Questionnaire [RHQ]).
administered for the purpose of public health surveillance which includes some questions which are relevant in the context of this study. This data linkage will be done strictly for CAF retention research purposes and information collected will never be placed in your personnel files or be used to guide decisions about your military career. Should you have any questions or concerns about data linkage, please contact the Project Horizon Team at Horizon@forces.gc.ca.

Is my information confidential and anonymous? All information you provide in the survey will be kept strictly confidential and will only be shared with members of the research team. Your information is not anonymous: we ask for your Service Number in order to match your survey responses to your responses from other data sources. However, once data matching is completed, all identifying information, including your Service Number, will be removed from the database to maintain your privacy. Only group results will be reported, and your personal information will never be mentioned in any published results. Completed consent forms will be stored in a secure area and will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study. Electronic records of survey responses will be stored on a secured network.

ATIP Considerations: DGMPIRA and the research team are committed to protecting your personal information. However, under the Access to Information and Privacy Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to obtain copies of research reports and research data (including the database pertaining to this project) held in Federal government files. Prior to releasing requested information, the Directorate of Access to Information and Privacy (DAIP) screens the information to ensure that individual identities (including indirect identification due to the collection of unique identifiers such as rank and occupation) are not disclosed.

What are the risks of participating in Project Horizon? Due to the nature of the research, your participation in this study will require that you volunteer or share personal experiences and information, but there is no anticipated risk or discomfort associated with the questions. You are not required to respond to any question that you are not comfortable with.

Are there any benefits to my participation? You will be helping to identify some of the factors associated with the commitment and retention of CAF members. In addition, recommendations stemming from a better understanding of retention factors will be used to enhance early career experiences of CAF members like you. We will also provide you with study updates including some of the highlights from the research findings. We hope that you will find these research findings informative and interesting.

Has this project been reviewed by an ethics review board? This research project has been approved by the DGMPIRA Social Science Research Review Board, in accordance with DAOD 5062-0 and 5062-1. The SSRBB approval # is 1366/14F.

What if I have questions or concerns? If you have any questions, comments or concerns related to the study, you can contact the Project Horizon Team at Horizon@forces.gc.ca. If you have any questions or concerns regarding research ethics, you can contact the SSRBB at SSRBB-CERS@forces.gc.ca.

Phase 2 Acceptance: By completing and submitting the questionnaire, you indicate that:

1) You understand to your satisfaction the information provided to you about your participation in this research project, and

2) You agree to participate as a research subject in the second phase of Project Horizon.

In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researcher, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. You should feel free to ask for clarification throughout your participation.

What about the next phases of Project Horizon? For the next phases of the study, we would like to send invitations to Project Horizon members by email. Furthermore, we would also like to use this address to send you study updates with research findings that you may find interesting. Please be assured that we will not share this personal information with anyone or use this information for any other purpose than the ones described herein.

Please provide an e-mail address that we may use to contact you in approximately 3 months to participate in the next phase of Project Horizon.

Email address: _____________________________ (Please print clearly)
Consent Form for Time 2

(Project Horizon Phase 4 was used for time 2 data.)

A.4 Phase 4 Consent Form

PROJECT HORIZON: CAF EARLY CAREER STUDY – PHASE 4

What is Project Horizon? Project Horizon: CAF Early Career Study is administered under the direction of the Director General Military Personnel Research and Analysis (DGMPRA). Its goal is to collect information about a variety of factors associated with your early career experiences, your satisfaction with various aspects of training and military life, and your career intentions. This will be achieved through a longitudinal design, that is, the administration of surveys at a few key moments in a CAF member’s early career.

Do I have to participate? As you may recall, Project Horizon was designed to follow numerous platoons through their early career experiences and your basic training platoon was among those invited to participate in this innovative study. Your participation in Project Horizon is completely voluntary.

What will my participation entail? Participation in Project Horizon entails the completion of up to four surveys throughout your first year of service: at the beginning and end of basic military training, 3 months after basic military training and 6 months after that. Today, you are invited to complete the final survey planned for this study (if a follow-up study is conducted at some point in the future, you will be free to choose whether or not to participate at that time; alternatively, you may withdraw from the study as described below). In this final survey, you will be asked a variety of questions about your background, your current phase of training or initial work experience; your military experiences thus far, your feelings toward the CAF, and your career intentions. It should take approximately 25-30 minutes to complete this survey.

What if I didn’t participate in the first phases of the study? Regardless of your decision to participate or not in the first phases of the study, today you are free to choose whether you would like to participate in the fourth phase. It is not necessary to participate in the first phases in order to participate in the subsequent phases of Project Horizon. You can join the group of participants at any time.

What if I want to quit at some point in the study? You may withdraw from Project Horizon at any time without suffering any repercussions or consequences to your military career. You may also refuse to answer any personal questions you don’t want to answer and still remain in the study. If you decide you no longer wish to be part of Project Horizon after you have already provided information, at your request, we will remove your information from consideration before conducting analyses and producing a final report.

How will my information be used? As part of Project Horizon, we would like to link your survey responses to the other phases of the study and to other data sources, in order to enhance our understanding of retention factors. Specifically, we would like to match your survey information with DND personnel records containing information from the application and selection process as well as the release process (if applicable). and with some of your responses from another DND endorsed survey that you may have completed earlier in your training at CFLRS (namely, the Recruit Health Questionnaire [RIHQ] administered for the purpose of public health surveillance). This data linkage will be done strictly for CAF retention research purposes and information collected will never be placed in your personnel files or be used to guide decisions about your military career. Should you have any questions or concerns about data linkage, please contact the Project Horizon Team at Horizon@forces.gc.ca.

Is my information confidential and anonymous? All information you provide in the survey will be kept strictly confidential and will only be shared with members of the research team. Your information is not anonymous: the unique survey link provided to you allows us to link your survey responses to those provided in other phases of the study and other data sources (if you have consented to this above). However, once data matching is completed, all identifying information will be removed from the database to maintain your privacy. Only group results will be reported, and your personal information will never be mentioned in any published results. Electronic records of survey responses will be stored on a secured network.

ATIP Considerations: DGMPRA and the research team are committed to protecting your personal information. However, under the Access to Information and Privacy Act, Canadian citizens are entitled to obtain copies of research reports and research data (including the database pertaining to this project) held in Federal government files. Prior to releasing requested information, the Directorate of Access to Information and Privacy (DAIP) screens the information to ensure that individual identities (including indirect identification due to the collection of unique identifiers such as rank and occupation) are not disclosed.

What are the risks of participating in Project Horizon? Due to the nature of the research, your participation in this study will require that you volunteer or share personal experiences and information, but there is no anticipated risk or discomfort associated with the questions. You are not required to respond to any question that you are not comfortable with.
Demographic Information (Time 1)

For the purpose of this study only; anonymous participant code, rank (Officer or NCM), occupational authority, environment, gender, age group, first official language, marital status, dependants, and education will be collected from the biographical information.

Section 2: Biographical Information

8. What is your sex?
   - ☐ Male
   - ☐ Female

9. What is your age? ________________________

10. What is your first official language?
    - ☐ English
    - ☐ French

11. What language do you speak most often at home?
    - ☐ English
    - ☐ French
    - ☐ Other. Please specify: ____________________

12. Do you speak any other languages on a regular basis at home? (Check all that apply)
    - ☐ No
    - ☐ Yes, English
    - ☐ Yes, French
    - ☐ Yes, Other. Please specify: ____________________

13. Are you a member of one or more of the following groups: Aboriginal Peoples, visible minorities? (Voluntary self-identification)
    - ☐ Yes
    - ☐ No
Perceived Accuracy of the Realistic Job Preview (Time 1 and Time 2)

Please indicate the extent to which the following sources portrayed a realistic picture of [environmental training / occupational training / working in a unit / professional training / military colleges]

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>N/A</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely unrealistic</td>
<td>Unrealistic</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>Completely realistic</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official information sources – CAF website</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official information sources – Brochures</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Official information sources – Videos</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
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Job Satisfaction (Time 2)

This section examines how you feel about the work you are doing in your current phase of training. Please rate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All in all, I am satisfied with my job.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, I don’t like my job.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, I like working here.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Affective Organizational Commitment (Time 2)
Please rate your level of agreement with each statement using the scale below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
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<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Strongly disagree</td>
<td>Disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat disagree</td>
<td>Somewhat agree</td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td>Strongly agree</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I would be happy to spend the rest of my career in the CAF. 1 2 3 4 5 6
I really feel as if the CAF’s problems are my own. 1 2 3 4 5 6
I do not feel like “part of the family” in the CAF. 1 2 3 4 5 6
I do not feel “emotionally attached” to the CAF. 1 2 3 4 5 6
The CAF has a great deal of personal meaning for me. 1 2 3 4 5 6
I do not feel a strong sense of “belonging” to the CAF. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Work-life Balance (Time 2)**

This section asks you to assess various aspects of your current phase of training and military life in general. Using the scale below, please indicate your level of satisfaction with each statement.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Completely dissatisfied</td>
<td>Dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat dissatisfied</td>
<td>Somewhat satisfied</td>
<td>Satisfied</td>
<td>Completely satisfied</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Effects my training/career has on my personal relationships. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Effects my training/career has on my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6
Time spent away from my family. 1 2 3 4 5 6

**Turnover Intentions (Time 2)**

Please indicate your level of agreement with each of the following statements:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Definitely not</td>
<td>Probably not</td>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>Probably yes</td>
<td>Definitely yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I intend to leave the CAF upon completion of occupational training. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I intend to leave the CAF when I complete my obligatory service. 1 2 3 4 5 N/A
I intend to leave the CAF when I complete my terms of service. 1 2 3 4 5
I intend to stay in the CAF beyond my present terms of service, but not necessarily until retirement. 1 2 3 4 5
I intend to stay in the CAF until compulsory retirement age, if I can. 1 2 3 4 5
I intend to leave the CAF as soon as another job becomes available. 1 2 3 4 5
I intend to stay in the CAF but transfer to the Reserve Force. 1 2 3 4 5
I intend to stay in the CAF but transfer to a different occupation. 1 2 3 4 5
I intend to leave the CAF and take a public service job with the Department of National Defence. 1 2 3 4 5

**Open-Ended Question (Time 2)**
What do you know now that you wish you had known prior to selecting this occupation?