

An Analysis of Leadership and Organisational Support in Enhancing Military Personnel Commitment and Operational Efficiency: A Secondary Data Approach to the Malaysian Territorial Army

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Abstract

This study analyses secondary data to investigate the role of leadership behaviours and organizational support in influencing personnel commitment and operational efficiency in the Malaysian Territorial Army (TA). Drawing on existing reports, case studies, and military documents, the research focuses on understanding the relationship between leadership, support systems, motivation, behaviour, and morale, with morale considered as a potential mediating factor. The findings contribute to enhancing military human resource management practices and provide practical insights for improving leadership practices and support systems within the Malaysian Territorial Army. The data analysed for this study were derived from a range of secondary sources, including official defence reports, studies on military leadership and human resource practices, and institutional reviews of the Malaysian Army's leadership structure. These documents offer empirical insights into leadership dynamics, support structures, and personnel behaviours within the Territorial Army. The analysis identified key trends and relationships between leadership quality and operational efficiency, as well as their effects on personnel morale and commitment. For instance, transformational leadership was found to significantly enhance job satisfaction and loyalty among military personnel, while embedded military values and consistent leadership practices contributed to stronger organisational cohesion and behavioural discipline.

Keywords: Territorial Army (TA), Military Leadership, Personnel Morale, Operational Efficiency, Organisational Commitment

Introduction

This study investigates the role of leadership and organisational support in influencing commitment and operational efficiency within the Malaysian Territorial Army (TA). The TA

plays a pivotal role in Malaysia's defence strategy, supplementing regular forces during times of emergency, disaster relief, and national security operations. Given the strategic importance of these factors, understanding their impact is crucial for improving overall military effectiveness. As military personnel in the TA are tasked with a broad range of responsibilities, their motivation, morale, and commitment to the organisation are key to ensuring operational success. Therefore, the effective leadership and support systems within the TA are essential for enhancing its capability and overall operational efficiency. This research is needed as limited empirical focus exists on how these elements influence TA personnel, which could significantly affect the overall performance of the force in critical operational contexts. Prior research has shown that transformational leadership significantly enhances job satisfaction and organisational loyalty among Malaysian military personnel (Rahman, 2019). Furthermore, clear leadership principles rooted in military tradition contribute to stronger unit cohesion and behavioural discipline (Mohamed, 2023). Organisational support, including structured development pathways and welfare considerations, has also been found to foster commitment and improve performance outcomes, which is particularly crucial given the unique challenges faced by the TA (Defence, 2020). This study aims to fill the gap in existing literature by offering insights derived from secondary data sources such as official military reports, academic publications, and institutional documents. These sources provide valuable information regarding the internal dynamics of the TA, particularly in relation to leadership practices and organisational support systems. By synthesising these sources, the study aims to shed light on how leadership behaviours and organisational support mechanisms influence personnel morale, motivation, and ultimately, operational outcomes.

Significance of the Study

This study holds significant value for multiple stakeholders by providing actionable insights into enhancing leadership effectiveness and organizational support within the Malaysian Territorial Army (TA). For military leadership, the research elucidates how democratic leadership styles positively influence job satisfaction among officers. (Rahman, 2019) found that democratic leadership correlates significantly with higher job satisfaction levels among Malaysian Army College officers, suggesting that adopting such leadership approaches can enhance personnel morale and commitment.

From a human resource management perspective, the study underscores the importance of structured career development programs. (Mohamed, 2023) demonstrated that career development mediates the relationship between career planning and job satisfaction in the Malaysian Armed Forces, indicating that well-defined career pathways can lead to increased job satisfaction and retention.

For policymakers and defense planners, the findings offer evidence-based recommendations for resource allocation and organizational reforms. (Wan Husin, 2018) highlighted the significant impact of leadership on job satisfaction among soldiers, emphasizing the need for effective leadership training and supportive work environments to enhance operational readiness.

Academically, this research contributes to the broader understanding of military organizational behaviour by providing empirical evidence on the interplay between

leadership styles, organizational support, and personnel outcomes. The insights gained can inform future studies and practical applications in similar military contexts.

Literature Review

This section reviews current research on the role of leadership, organisational support, and motivation in military contexts, with emphasis on the Malaysian Territorial Army (TA).

Prior studies have established that effective leadership—particularly transformational and participative styles—significantly impacts military personnel's job satisfaction, morale, and overall performance. (Rahman, 2019) found that transformational leaders inspire trust and motivation, leading to increased loyalty and operational commitment among Malaysian military personnel. Similarly, (Jalal, 2021) stressed that military leadership grounded in discipline, loyalty, and shared values is essential for promoting cohesion, behavioural discipline, and operational readiness within military units.

Organisational support mechanisms also play a vital role in shaping personnel outcomes. (Halim, 2022), demonstrated that support systems such as structured career pathways, welfare programmes, and institutional mentorship contribute to enhanced psychological well-being and long-term organisational commitment. These systems not only assist in managing work-related stress but also serve as motivational tools that reinforce a soldier's sense of belonging and purpose.

The strategic importance of human capital development is highlighted in the Malaysian Defence White Paper (Defence, 2020) which advocates for robust leadership training, personnel welfare initiatives, and systematic talent development. These initiatives are considered critical to sustaining the effectiveness and operational readiness of part-time and full-time military components, including the TA.

Despite the above, existing research tends to generalise findings from regular military forces to part-time personnel without accounting for the unique structural and operational challenges faced by the Territorial Army. There is limited literature specifically addressing how leadership and organisational support affect morale, motivation, and commitment within the TA's part-time structure. Most empirical studies focus on the regular force, leaving a significant gap in understanding the behavioural and organisational dynamics of part-time soldiers.

This study aims to bridge that gap by analysing secondary data from institutional documents and peer-reviewed research to evaluate how leadership behaviours and support systems influence psychological outcomes (such as morale and motivation) and commitment among Territorial Army personnel. By doing so, it adds new insights into the internal workings of the TA and offers evidence-based recommendations for leadership and HR development within this unique segment of the military force.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research design grounded in secondary data analysis to examine how leadership behaviours and organisational support contribute to personnel commitment and operational efficiency within the Malaysian Territorial Army (TA). Given the limitations in accessing primary field data in military settings due to security restrictions and

operational sensitivity, secondary data analysis is both practical and methodologically sound for interpreting institutional dynamics (Johnston, 2017).

The research follows the principles of document analysis, as outlined by (Bowen, 2009) involving a systematic review of textual data to identify patterns, categories, and themes. This approach enables the researcher to distil meaning from complex organisational reports, policy documents, and empirical studies by focusing on both manifest content (explicit information) and latent content (underlying meanings).

The corpus of data includes:

- Ministry of Defence Annual Reports (Defence, 2020) which provide institutional insights into operational strategies, training frameworks, and leadership development in the Malaysian Army;
- Internal assessments by the Malaysian Army (2019) related to TA training participation and morale;
- Peer-reviewed studies on military leadership and commitment (Jalal, 2021); (Halim, 2022)
- Academic literature on organisational behaviour and support in military contexts (Yukl, 2013) (Griffith, 2002)

An a priori coding scheme was developed based on themes found in the literature—such as *leadership influence*, *organisational support*, *morale*, *engagement*, and *operational efficiency*—and then applied to the selected documents. A deductive thematic analysis approach was used, complemented by openness to emergent codes to capture unexpected themes arising from the texts (Braun, 2006).

To enhance credibility, a triangulation strategy was applied by cross-referencing themes across multiple document types—government reports, scholarly articles, and institutional reviews. This helped reduce bias and validate the consistency of findings (Patton, 1999).

Although no interviews or surveys were conducted, the qualitative depth of the materials provided a basis for reconstructing patterns of thought, perception, and behaviour among military personnel. The study ultimately identified three major thematic categories: Leadership Influence, Support Structures, and Personnel Morale, which form the framework of the Results and Discussion sections.

Analytical Approach

The analysis of secondary data was conducted using document analysis techniques as delineated by (Bowen, 2009), which involve a systematic review of textual materials to identify and categorise recurring patterns, themes, and reported outcomes. This method facilitates the extraction of meaningful insights from complex organisational documents, policy papers, and empirical studies by examining both explicit content and underlying meanings.

To structure the thematic analysis, the study employed the framework proposed by (Braun, 2006), which provides a flexible and rigorous approach to identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns within qualitative data. This process entailed familiarisation with the data, generation of initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report.

To ensure the credibility and dependability of findings, a triangulation strategy was implemented, as advocated by (Patton, 1999), involving the cross-verification of emergent themes across multiple document types, including government reports, institutional evaluations, and academic studies.

Additionally, the principles of (Lincoln, 1985) were applied to enhance trustworthiness through conformability and dependability measures, ensuring that interpretations were firmly grounded in the data rather than researcher bias. Moreover, (Corbin, 2008) provided guidance on managing the interplay between existing theory and emerging data, which helped maintain analytical sensitivity while preventing premature closure in theme development.

Although no interviews or surveys were conducted, the richness of the analysed secondary materials—ranging from Ministry of Defence reports to academic studies—enabled the reconstruction of conceptual patterns related to leadership impact, support mechanisms, and morale. These were ultimately synthesised into three major thematic categories: *Leadership Influence*, *Support Structures*, and *Personnel Morale*, which structure the Results and Discussion sections.

Results/Findings

This section presents the key themes identified from the analysed secondary data, focusing on trends in leadership influence, support structures, and personnel morale within the Malaysian Territorial Army (TA). The following subsections outline the major findings, supported by real-world evidence from peer-reviewed studies, institutional reports, and relevant case studies.

Leadership Influence

The analysis of leadership behaviour within the Malaysian Territorial Army highlighted significant trends in the effectiveness of transformational and transactional leadership styles. Research has demonstrated that transformational leadership has a positive impact on job satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty among military personnel. (Rahman, 2019) found that transformational leadership in military contexts—defined by the ability to inspire, motivate, and provide a clear vision—was linked to increased job satisfaction and a sense of duty among service members. For example, leaders who prioritised open communication, mentorship, and empowerment were able to cultivate a sense of belonging and enthusiasm, leading to stronger morale and commitment within their units.

In contrast, transactional leadership, which is centred around reward and punishment systems, has been shown to yield more short-term compliance and operational efficiency but may not be as effective in fostering long-term commitment. A study by (Yukl, 2013) highlighted that while transactional leadership can drive immediate task-oriented results, it fails to significantly enhance intrinsic motivation or personnel loyalty over time, especially during prolonged deployments.

Support Structures

Organisational support mechanisms, such as structured career development programmes, well-being initiatives, and mental health services, were identified as critical factors in

fostering commitment and morale within the TA. The Ministry of Defence Annual Report (Defence, 2020) revealed that the establishment of clear career progression routes and the availability of welfare services directly contributed to higher levels of personnel engagement and long-term commitment. Personnel who had access to well-defined professional development pathways, as well as support systems addressing mental health and stress resilience, demonstrated greater satisfaction and organisational loyalty.

Additionally, the Security and Defence Review by (Culea, 2024) underscored the importance of clear progression routes and mental health support, specifically for military personnel deployed in high-stress environments. Culea's research noted that personnel with access to psychological support services were significantly more likely to remain committed and exhibit higher levels of operational readiness, especially during periods of heightened stress or combat. A case study within the NATO framework also illustrated that mental health support was a key determinant in maintaining the operational effectiveness of multinational forces, particularly those deployed in conflict zones (Culea, 2024).

Personnel Morale

Personnel morale was consistently found to be a decisive factor in operational readiness and overall performance. According to (Halim, 2022), personnel who perceived both leadership and organisational support as effective showed enhanced emotional well-being, which in turn positively influenced their commitment and behaviour. High morale was directly linked to improved team cohesion and collaboration, as personnel with a positive outlook were more likely to engage actively in team-based tasks, thus improving overall efficiency and mission success.

The role of morale in combat situations is well-documented. A study by (Griffith, 2002) demonstrated that high morale among military personnel contributed to stronger resilience during combat, enabling service members to maintain focus under pressure. This was particularly evident in cases where troops had positive relationships with their leaders and strong organisational backing, allowing them to weather the challenges of prolonged missions with higher levels of engagement and commitment. Furthermore, (Patton, 1999) noted that personnel with elevated morale were more likely to exhibit proactive behaviours such as collaboration, decision-making under pressure, and the ability to perform complex tasks efficiently.

Discussion

The results of this study reveal significant patterns that align with and extend past studies on leadership and organisational support within military contexts.

Alignment with Past Studies

The findings corroborate with previous research that demonstrates the critical role of transformational leadership in enhancing morale and commitment. (Rahman, 2019), similarly found that leadership behaviour greatly influences personnel loyalty, which in turn enhances overall organisational commitment. Furthermore, the emphasis on career development and welfare support aligns with the findings of (Halim, 2022) who noted that structured support mechanisms improve both psychological well-being and organisational effectiveness in military settings.

New Insights

One key insight revealed by the analysis is the strong mediating role of morale. While past studies have examined leadership and support structures separately, this study underscores the interdependent nature of these elements and their collective influence on operational efficiency. Personnel morale not only influences individual commitment but also plays a central role in team cohesion, which is crucial for operational readiness in the TA. This highlights the need for a more holistic approach to leadership and support systems within the Malaysian Territorial Army.

Implications for Commanders and Policymakers

Commanders and military policymakers can learn from these findings that investing in leadership development and organisational support structures directly impacts personnel commitment and operational performance. Practical measures such as enhancing mentorship programmes, improving communication channels between officers and enlisted personnel, and providing mental health support could significantly bolster morale and commitment, leading to better overall operational efficiency.

Conclusion

In summary, this study highlights the critical role of leadership behaviours and organisational support in fostering personnel morale and commitment within the Malaysian Territorial Army. The results demonstrate that transformational leadership and structured support systems significantly influence personnel attitudes and operational outcomes, while morale serves as a vital mediator in this process.

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