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MBM (DEF & SEC)

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**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SMALL UNIT
COHESION IN MALAYSIAN INFANTRY
BATTALIONS**

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**MASTER OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
(DEFENCE AND SECURITY)**

**NATIONAL DEFENCE UNIVERSITY OF
MALAYSIA**

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**FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO SMALL UNIT COHESION IN
MALAYSIAN INFANTRY BATTALIONS**

MEJAR ADI MUSTAPHA BIN ARIFIN

Thesis submitted to Centre for Graduate Studies, National Defence University of
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ABSTRACT

The level of cohesion in platoons of Malaysian infantry battalions has not been measured. This measurement is critical to maintain combat readiness, improve the quality of training, and streamline administration in infantry units. Factors that contribute to platoon cohesion need to be identified and evaluated. Thus, literature has suggested four contributing factors to be evaluated, namely, peer bonding, teamwork, caring leader, and competent leader. The quantitative research method was used. Primary data were collected using an online questionnaire platform that was developed using the Google Forms application. 14 rifle platoons of two standard infantry battalions of the Royal Malay Regiment were selected for primary data collection. Data were analysed using Statistical Package for Social Science version 26.0 in which descriptive, correlation, and multiple linear regression analysis were performed. Descriptive analysis has found that the level of each variable was high, and this has shown that the variables has occurred at a high level (or perceived to be high) among infantry platoon members. Meanwhile, correlation analysis has found that all independent variables have a strong relationship with platoon cohesion. Finally, multiple linear regression analysis has found that competent leader has made the strongest contribution in explaining the variations in platoon cohesion. The second highest significant variable was teamwork. Meanwhile, peer bonding and caring leader have contributed very minimal to the variations of platoon cohesion. It can be summarized that these four variables have a substantial contribution to the variations of platoon cohesion. As a conclusion, all research objectives and hypotheses were evaluated and statistically proven.

ABSTRAK

Tahap kohesi platon di battalion-batalion infantri Malaysia belum diukur. Pengukuran ini sangat penting untuk menjaga kesiapsiagaan tempur, meningkatkan mutu latihan, dan melicinkan pentadbiran di unit infantri. Faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada kohesi platon perlu dikenal pasti dan dinilai. Oleh itu, literatur telah mencadangkan empat faktor penyumbang untuk dinilai iaitu ikatan rakan sebaya, kerja berpasukan, pemimpin prihatin, dan pemimpin kompeten. Kaedah kajian kuantitatif telah digunakan. Data primer telah dikumpulkan menggunakan platform soal selidik dalam talian yang dibangunkan menggunakan aplikasi Google Forms. 14 platon raifal dari dua buah batalion infantri standard Rejimen Askar Melayu Diraja telah dipilih untuk pengumpulan data primer. Data telah dianalisis menggunakan Statistical Package for Social Science versi 26.0 di mana analisis deskriptif, korelasi, dan regresi linear berganda dilaksanakan. Analisis deskriptif mendapati bahawa tahap setiap pemboleh ubah adalah tinggi, dan ini menunjukkan bahawa semua pemboleh ubah tersebut wujud pada tahap tinggi (atau dianggap tinggi) di kalangan anggota platon infantri. Manakala, analisis korelasi mendapati bahawa semua pemboleh ubah bebas mempunyai hubungan yang kuat dengan kohesi platon. Akhir sekali, analisis regresi linear berganda mendapati bahawa pemimpin kompeten telah memberikan kesan paling kuat dalam menjelaskan variasi dalam kohesi platon. Pemboleh ubah signifikan kedua tertinggi adalah kerja berpasukan. Sementara itu, pemimpin prihatin dan ikatan rakan sebaya telah memberikan kesan minimum terhadap variasi kohesi platon. Dapat dirumuskan bahawa keempat-empat pemboleh ubah ini mempunyai sumbangan besar terhadap variasi kohesi platon. Sebagai kesimpulan, semua objektif dan hipotesis kajian telah dinilai dan telah dibuktikan secara statistik.

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ملاسلا مكيداء ءمحرول الله ءتاكربو

O Allah! Make my heart peaceful and expand it (for knowledge) and ease my task for me and remove the impediment from my speech, so they may understand what I say. Ameen.

I would like to express my gratitude to Allah S.W.T because with His consent and assistance, I was able to complete this research to qualify for the award of Master of Business Management (Defence and Security). I would like to thank to Lt Kol Dr. S. Ananthan a/l Subramaniam (Retired), a very hardworking and kind supervisor. This is not the first time we have worked together. He had been my supervisor before, when I was a student at the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College in 2017. Without his valuable comments and guidance, this research would not have been possible. My special thanks to Brigadier Jeneral Khairul Anuar bin Abd Aziz, commander of the 6th Malaysian Infantry Brigade for the permission granted for data collection. Without the approval given by him, I could not have obtained the primary data for this research. My thanks also go to my beloved wife, Ezadtul Norsaida binti Ismail and to my beloved daughter, Eryna Safiya binti Adi Mustapha for always going through the days together as well as providing moral support throughout this one year of study. This study would not have been able to be completed successfully without their support. My very profound gratitude also to my dear parents, Arifin bin Abdul Wahab and Maziah binti Ludin for their continuous prayers. Indeed, their prayers have been the key to this success. I would like to express my gratitude to the Vice Chancellor and all NDUM lecturers for their help and support throughout the course. My thanks also extend to every individual and organization that has directly or indirectly contributed to this research. Finally, to all members of the Malaysian Army, especially my comrades-in-arms from the Royal Malay Regiment, thank you for your support. Only Allah can repay your contributions and kindness. May all of you have the blessings of Allah S.W.T.

اللهابو قفوة ءيادهاو ملاسلاو مكيداء ءمحرول الله ءتاكربو

APPROVAL

The Examination Committee has met on..... to conduct the final examination of **Mejar Adi Mustapha bin Arifin** on his degree thesis entitled '**Factors Contributing to Small Unit Cohesion in Malaysian Infantry Battalions**'

The committee recommends that the student be awarded the Master of Business Management (Defence and Security).

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DECLARATION OF THESIS

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Date of birth: **10 February 1983**

Title: **Factors Contributing to Small Unit Cohesion in Malaysian Infantry Battalions**

Academic Session: **2020/2021**

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ARI	-	United States Army Research Institute
BR	-	Border Regiment
CPCQ	-	Combat platoon Cohesion Questionnaire
CRMQ	-	Combat Readiness Morale Questionnaire
DV	-	Dependent Variable
GEQ	-	Group Environment Questionnaire
IDF	-	Israeli Defence Force
IIMS	-	Israeli Institute for Military Studies
INSAN	-	Health Training Institute of MAF
IV	-	Independent Variable
KPI	-	Key Performance Indicator
MAF	-	Malaysian Armed Forces
MATS	-	Malaysian Army Training Systems
MCO	-	Movement Control Order
NCO	-	Non-commissioned Officer
NDUM	-	National Defence University of Malaysia
PCI	-	Platoon Cohesion Index

- RMR - Royal Malay Regiment
- RRR - Royal Ranger Regiment
- RSR - Royal Signal Regiment
- SFS - Situational Force Scoring
- SNCO - Senior Non-commissioned Officer
- SOP - Standard operating Procedures
- SPSS - Statistical Package for the Social Science
- WRAIR - Walter Reed Army Institute of Research

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

"To ensure that the goal is achieved, the slogan 'Army One, Because We Are United' has been the theme for this year's Army Day. Therefore, I want the officers and soldiers to increase the level of cohesion of their group. That goal is difficult to achieve if we do not have a high level of loyalty, have the same purpose, mind, and direction."

*Jeneral Tan Sri Dato' Sri Zulkipli bin Haji Kassim
26th Chief of Army
(Omar Osman, 2017)*

The Malaysian Army has well-established procedures in place to measure unit combat readiness, so that the state of readiness can always be monitored. It is to ensure that the units are always able to be deployed for any mission. The readiness evaluations usually include an assessment of unit level tactical proficiency, equipment serviceability inspections, manning levels, audit of logistic stocks and supply processes, and reviews of each unit member's individual readiness status (Inderjit et al., 2014). As stated by Bester & Stanz (2007), two aspects of combat readiness need

to be measured, namely, the material dimension and the psychosocial dimension. Such as the procedure being used by the Malaysian Army called Situational Force Scoring (SFS), it only evaluates a tangible material dimension which can be predetermined prior to any military mission like the number of mortars, the serviceability of mortar transporters, and the availability of ammunition. Bester & Stanz (2007) argue that unit readiness must be measured in terms of its psychosocial dimensions as well by looking at several domains such as morale. Morale requires cohesion, *esprit de corps*, a general willingness to deploy, discipline, and common goal for it to stand firm. Therefore, this research is important to pave the way for the Malaysian Army, in particular the Infantry Corps, to begin efforts for measuring intangible factors to determine the state of readiness of the infantry units with more comprehensive manner. This study is important as it is conducted on an academic approach focused solely on cohesion at platoon level which will eventually produce general conclusions about the current state of cohesion of platoons in infantry units in the Malaysian Army. Additionally, the same set of questionnaires used in this study can be used as a standard set of platoon cohesion measurement tools that can be directly used by commanding officers to assess the condition of their subordinate's cohesion strength in future.

The results of the cohesion assessment at the platoon level will also help the commanding officer to analyze, design, develop, conduct, and evaluate the training programs, so that the training can have a positive impact on their cohesion level. This means, the results of this research are important to be used by commanding officers and their staffs as additional insights in the overall process of the Malaysian Army Training System (MATS) at the unit level as stated by the Malaysian Army Training and Doctrine Command (2005). As the research is also conducted to prove the

interrelationship of several influencing factors of cohesion at platoon level, the results of this research are important for the commanding officer and his staffs to refine the existing organizational objectives, Standard Operating Procedures (SOP), orders, and instructions especially those related to training. The target group for a particular type of training can also be better defined by commanding officer and his staffs, so that the training is more beneficial to the group that really needs it to cultivate their cohesion.

In terms of measuring the individual Key Performance Indicator (KPI), the Malaysian Army uses *Laporan Penilaian Prestasi dan Tahap Kecekapan Anggota-Anggota Angkatan Tentera Malaysia* as directed in *Perintah Majlis Angkatan Tentera (PMAT Bil 4/ 2003)* (MAF HQ, 2003). The evaluation scales contained in two documents, BAT D 11 for officers and BAT D 30 for other ranks, are quite difficult to be filled by commanding officers without any supporting data, especially for personal value scales and task execution scales. The scoring process can be done more transparently if the commanding officers adapted a bottom-up management approach to obtain the views of their soldiers. Therefore, this can be done when space is given to soldiers to channel their feedback through a set of questionnaires to measure the strength of their platoon cohesion and the competence of their leaders in their platoon. The data collected from the questionnaires will be analyzed and then the filling of BAT D 11 or BAT D 30 can be done better with data supporting. Therefore, this study is important to enable commanding officers to measure the performance of officers and SNCOs more accurately.

Finally, is about the mandate that has been expressed by the 28th Chief of Army, which is to strengthen the unity and cohesion of the Malaysian Army, which derives

from the second pillar of his *Perintah Ulung* (MA HQ, 2020). Therefore, this research is important as one of the subs actions plans to realize it through a measurement that does not require high costs yet produces a great impact on operations, training, and administration matters in the infantry units. In conclusion, the importance of this research can be explained briefly as shown in Figure 1.1.

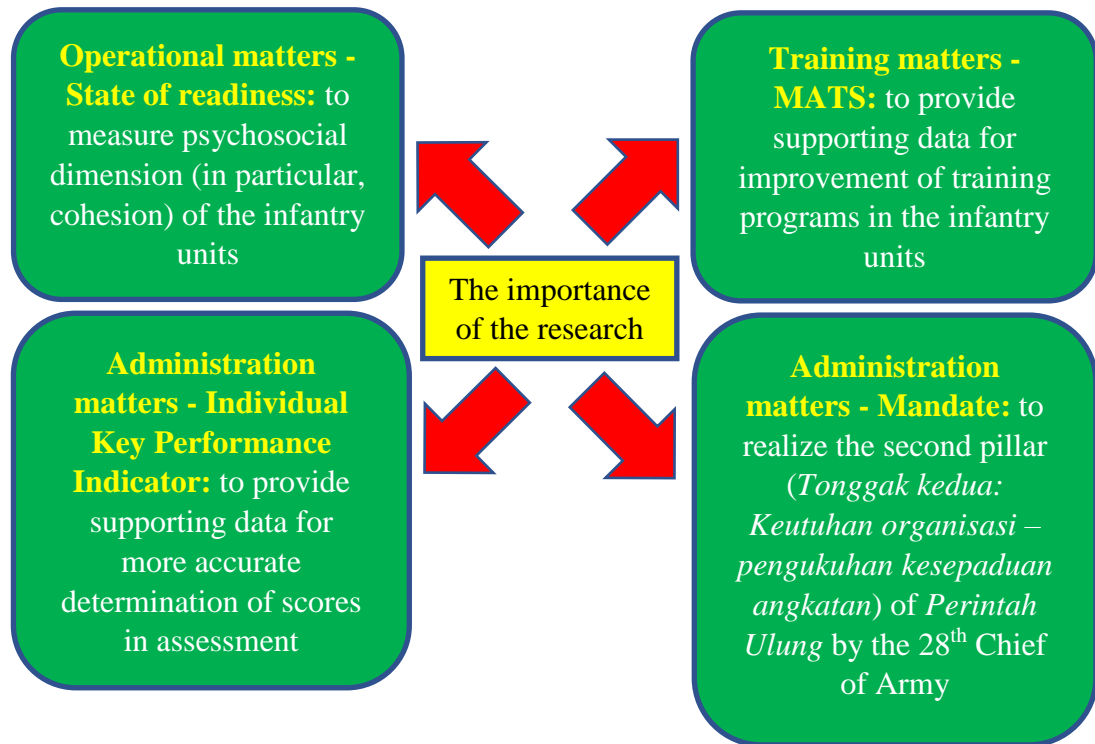


Figure 1.1: The Importance of the Research

Signposting: This chapter begins with an introduction and background of the study, which explain why this study is important and needed to be conducted. The problem statement is clearly mentioned by using the three statements approach. There are three research objectives and three research questions to be answered. In the conceptual framework section, there is an explanation of a model that shows the general concept of the relationship between several influencing factors related to the cohesion of the platoon in the infantry units of the Malaysian Army. Scope of study includes an