

## **Measuring The Intangible Military Combat Readiness In The Malaysian Armed Forces**

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### **Abstract:**

Militaries throughout the world believe that military force as coercive armaments will eventually be the ultimate measure of power, as military capabilities enable countries to respond to internal and external challenges. Malaysia's military forces, as well as other security agencies, lack a model or framework for combat readiness and an assessment instrument for assessing individual and collective team preparedness prior to deployment for any operations, including international peacekeeping operations and humanitarian disaster relief operations within the country. Currently, security agencies review their combat assessment piecemeal and in silos, which frequently results in discrepancies and compatibility issues, especially when they are required to operate cohesively during a combat operation that includes both domestic and foreign duties. A systematic assessment approach for all security forces must be devised to address such concerns and obstacles, particularly when they are required to collaborate with other forces on operations. Using a mixed-methods approach, the research will examine the factors influencing the current assessment of combat readiness for the majority of security forces prior to performing combat duties, with the goal of eventually proposing a systematic model and framework for combat readiness assessment that can be used by all security forces in Malaysia, particularly when collaborating in combined and joint operations. The purpose of this research is to address the current assessment gap in security forces by proposing a systematic model and developing an assessment instrument for determining the combat readiness of all Malaysian security forces, including the Malaysian Army, the Royal Malaysian Air Force, the Royal Malaysian Navy, the Royal Malaysian Police, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, and other relevant security forces.

Keywords: Combat readiness, combat preparedness, command climate

### **Introduction**

Malaysia's National Defence Policy demonstrates the country's ongoing commitment to enhancing national defence and modernising the Armed Forces (Malaysian National Defence Policy, 2014). The conceptions of national power policy include military preparedness as a component of national power (Creswell, 2014). Every security force in the globe maintains operational readiness in order to prepare their troops for any duty, both domestic and international. The overall trend in mathematical models and formulae for operational readiness measurement is to focus on either tangible or intangible components. Consequently, there is a lack of research into a model that incorporates both tangible and intangible components of combat readiness. Without a measure of intangible aspects in the model that measures tangible elements of combat power, and vice versa, a comprehensive assessment of combat readiness could not be provided. As a result, there is a need to develop a method for assessing combat readiness that encompasses both tangible and intangible factors, with an emphasis on the most effective use of current practice's knowledge and information for gauging military forces' combat readiness.

Malaysia ranks among the top Asian countries in terms of troop contributions to United Nations (UN) peacekeeping missions across the world. Malaysia is the seventh largest troop donor to UN peacekeeping deployments in Asia, according to UN Peacekeeping, having contributed 887 personnel to UN missions as

of October 2017. Apart from these international responsibilities, the Malaysian Armed Forces are tasked with the responsibility of defending the country's sovereignty in terms of security and defence against all external and internal threats. Frequently, they must collaborate with other law enforcement authorities to carry out such national responsibilities.

Currently, the Malaysian Army assesses combat readiness for deployment using the System Force Scoring (SFS), which measures solely combat logistical and manpower requirements. However, additional aspects influencing combat readiness such as morale, cohesion, teamwork, skills, competency, and welfare are not highlighted. There is a requirement to examine cognitive and intangible variables in order to assess whether an individual, unit, or organisation is prepared to deploy for combat responsibilities and operations. An early model of military readiness developed by the world's major military suggested that the human components of operational readiness were composed of several psychological components, including confidence, proficiency (acquired through training and experience), and comprehension and motivation for combat missions. Compatibility issues must be addressed in order for other security forces to act together rather than in isolation during operations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Literature text on past research and current framework assessment tools used by major militaries will be assessed including looking at their military doctrines. Morgenthau (1978) and Paret (1989) stated that the conceptions of national power include military preparedness as a component. Military organisations have well-established procedures for assessing units' readiness for deployment. These readiness assessments typically comprise tactical proficiency assessments at the unit level, equipment serviceability checks, manpower levels, audits of logistic stocks and supply systems, and assessments of each unit member's readiness status (typically medical, dental, and weapons test compliance). Despite the fact that military leaders throughout history have recognised the critical role of human elements in operational performance, formal assessments of psychological readiness appear to be the exception rather than the norm in today's military forces. This absence may be explained in part by the uncertainty about which factors influence psychological readiness and how they interact. In a nutshell, how do we measure psychological readiness and what factors most accurately predict it?

The study examines the interrelationships among human factors that influence individual and group psychological readiness. These factors include operational experience, behavioural health, morale, cohesion, the immediate commander's behaviour, and perceptions of leadership efficacy. Individual readiness is defined. Psychological readiness is a broad definition that encompasses factors such as physical and mental fitness, unit cohesion, organisational commitment, and self-reported preparedness. Shamir, Brainin, Zakay, and Popper (2000) demonstrated the importance of assessing readiness at various levels in the military as they discovered that perceptions of readiness at the soldier level were only moderately connected with perceptions at the instructional staff level.

Modern military forces are concerned with their personnel' survival and effectiveness on today's and tomorrow's battlefields, and are continually combining human and technical systems. This distinct culture is composed of a range of implicit, explicit, and inherent functions, processes, characteristics, and manifestations that dynamically unite an organisation. The command climate literature has identified a correlation between command climate and organizational/military unit effectiveness. A positive command climate contributes to the unit's development of performance, satisfaction, productivity, and growth (Griffin, 2001). Issac (1993) defined command climate as leader-subordinate interactions, performance and interaction. Additionally, Collin and Jacobs (2002) described climate as "a reflection of how members of an organisation feel about organisational factors such as job performance expectations, the fairness of rewards and punishment, the flow of communication, and the leadership example established by the company's leaders."

Thus, command climate establishes the organization's relevance and its climate, which eventually determines the unit's success, namely the organization's role in establishing interdependence among its personnel and the climate as the crucial link between personnel and organisation (James, 1982). The intangible elements derived from command climate definitions are variables that can be conceptualised and operationalized for the purpose of developing a command climate measurement instrument. The measure of command climate is conceptualised in terms of the two domains of command climate

described in the literature review, namely morale and environment. A unit's climate has a direct effect on its effectiveness. Reviewing the unit climate is critical for a commander since it enables him to manage his human resources efficiently; thus, a method for reviewing the unit climate is required for military unit assessment. Command implies authority, as well as a degree of formality and impersonality associated with the exercise of official authority. Additionally, command implies an expectation of obedience and the implication of imposing specific points of procedure or method (Malaysian Army, 2011).

### **Combat Readiness**

Sun Tzu emphasised the importance of readiness when he stated that it is a war doctrine not to presume the opponent will not come, but rather to rely on one's readiness to meet him (Griffith, 1971). Similarly, Clausewitz (1874) emphasised the importance of readiness when he stated that the term 'art of war' or 'science of war' refers to the "pattern and preparation and mode of using arms, construction of fortifications and entrenchments, organism of an army and mechanism of its movements,... the end and aim of them all was the establishment of an armed force fit for use." These previous definitions of readiness appear similar to contemporary ones. According to Betts (1995), readiness refers to the state of an asset's operational readiness to be used at its optimal or specified parameters. The term "asset utilisation" refers to the force's immediate capacity for combat, not to the capabilities of the desired size and type of force.

Similarly, the US Department of Defense (2010) defined readiness as "the capability of the United States military forces to fight and meet the requirements of national military policy." Russia places a similar emphasis on maintaining combat readiness, as reported in Interfax [Russia and CIS Military Daily (Moscow) on 4 February 2011] that increasing officer numbers will improve the army's combat readiness. Combat readiness determines the availability of force elements for the application of combat and fighting power in the majority of armed forces. The majority of doctrines define readiness as the period of time required to mount a specific operation (Malaysian Armed Forces, 2011). The armed forces maintain a constant state of readiness, as determined by evaluations of the response required for national defence crises and the required reaction time.

The readiness criteria for various elements of an armed force vary. Similar to other armed forces and armies, the Malaysian Army (2011, p.xii) defines combat readiness as "the ability of the Army and its constituent units and formations, weapon systems, or other military technology and equipment to perform during combat military operations, or functions consistent with the purpose for which they are organised or designed, or the management of armed forces." According to the criteria of combat readiness provided above, it is evident that gauging combat readiness must account for both tangible and intangible variables. This demonstrates the need of conceptualising a comprehensive measure of a military force's combat readiness.

### **Measuring Combat Readiness**

Literature has indicated that military forces in the world share the same concern of the need to gauge its combat readiness. Nonetheless, different defence forces assess combat readiness in different ways. For instance, the United States Department of Army Field Manual (FM) 100-11 (n.d.) said that measuring readiness involves a number of tangible and intangible factors. While some of these factors are quantifiable, others are not. The tangible elements of force readiness that may be objectively measured include personnel and equipment status. While the subjective determination is based on elements like as morale, cohesion, and leadership quality. The same manual emphasised the importance of a well-structured, manned, equipped, trained, deployed, supported, and funded organisation for force readiness management at all force levels.

Thus, this Field Manual is consistent with other literature that portrays assessing readiness as a difficult process involving both tangible and intangible components. Military organisations have well-established procedures for assessing units' readiness for deployment. These readiness evaluations typically comprise tactical proficiency exams at the unit level, equipment serviceability checks, manpower levels, audits of logistic stocks and supply systems, and assessments of each unit member's readiness status (typically medical, dental, and weapons test compliance). Despite the fact that military leaders throughout history

have recognised the critical role of human elements in operational performance, formal assessments of psychological readiness appear to be the exception rather than the norm in today's military forces. This absence may be explained in part by the uncertainty about which factors influence psychological readiness and how they interact.

In a nutshell, how do we quantify psychological readiness and what factors most accurately predict it? Shamir, Brainin, Zakay, and Popper (2000) illustrated the necessity of assessing readiness at various levels in the military when they discovered that perceptions of readiness at the soldier level were only moderately correlated with perceptions at the instructional staff level. The authors concluded that the two groups employed different standards to assess the combat readiness of units. The danger of different perceptions of readiness operating across levels of an organisation has been tragically demonstrated by incidents of indiscipline and atrocious behaviour on the part of deployed military personnel. Donna Winslow's socio-cultural analysis of the behaviour of the Canadian Airborne Regiment in Somalia is compelling reading (Winslow, 1997).

### **Assessment of Morale**

Morale in a military unit is demonstrated when soldiers prioritise the task over their personal concerns, even if this results in their death. Numerous definitions are used to describe morale. Baynes (1987) defines morale as "the enthusiasm with which a member of a group engages in the group's specified activities." Manning (1987), on the other hand, defines morale as "a function of cohesion and esprit de corps." Similarly, Britt, Castrol, and Adler (2006) define morale as "a soldier's level of desire, commitment, and enthusiasm for completing a unit mission objective under stressful circumstances." Morale is defined in this research as a soldier's level of motivation, commitment, and enthusiasm for completing a unit mission objective under stressful conditions, based on several definitions. According to the findings of the literature study, the various characteristics of morale that must be measured are leadership, motivation, esprit de corps, and spirituality.

Confidence in leadership is required among officers and soldiers at all levels to develop the required morale in an organisation. Without leadership and morale, fighting power and combat readiness will decline. Leadership is critical in sustaining the morale of soldiers, particularly those who are exposed to extreme conditions and heavy fire on the battlefield (Malaysian Army, 2007; United States Marine Corps, 1997; United States Department of Defence, 2010; Australian Army, 2009; Murphy & Farley, 2002; Gal & Manning, 1987; Goyne, 2004; Shamir et al., 2000; Hooker, 1995; Griffith, 2002; Nkewu, 2014).

Motivation is linked to the soldier's morale, as he must be motivated to confront the enemy despite the risk of injury or death. Without motivation, soldiers will not be combat-ready to carry out their objective (Murphy & Fogarty, 2009; Britt, Castrol & Adler, 2006; Siebold & Manning, 1999; Goyne, 2004).

Esprit de corps is intended to foster synergy toward performance and is the bond between soldiers and their secondary groups that extends beyond their primary group bonding and connects soldiers to the unit's institution. Thus, the degree of bonding among an organization's members will reflect their readiness to fight as a team and the fighting power generated (Malaysian Army, 2011; Cushman, 1947; Gal, 1986; Baynes, 1987; Siebold & Manning, 1999; Krulak, 1996).

Spirituality is a significant intangible component that functions as a force multiplier in a combat force and can be related to subjective results in the aspects of perceived quality of life, well-being, and life satisfaction. Thus, the level of spirituality shown by soldiers may be applied to assess the command climate in a military unit (Malaysian Army, 2007; Campbell, 1976; Andrews & Withey, 1976).

### **Assessment of Environment**

According to the Oxford English Dictionary, environment refers to the conditions or surroundings in which a person, animal, or plant lives or operates (Stevenson, 2013). As such, the domain of the environment in which soldiers operate plays a significant part in establishing a military unit's command climate. According to the literature review, the environmental dimensions that affect the command climate are work, neighbourhood and housing, community, and family and friends. These dimensions may

contribute in fostering soldier commitment, which result directly into the unit's high effectiveness. Numerous previous studies and research have established that work/job is a significant factor to the quality of life that affects an armed force's combat readiness (Campbell, 1976; Andrews & Withey, 1976; Flanagan, 1978; Bestuzhey-Lada, 1980; Murrell et al., 1983; Glatzer, 1987; Rath & Harter, 2010). The military unit focuses on the environment by providing a safe and conducive work environment that results in high job satisfaction and so improves the command climate.

Neighbourhoods and housing provide a social environment that contributes to an individual's overall quality of life (Sirgy & Cornwell, 2002). Housing, schools, commercial and retail facilities, employment, parks and recreation, health care and daycare, personal security, and neighbourhood safety all exist in healthy neighbourhoods. Thus, neighbourhood and housing function as motivators for soldiers, which is critical for command climate and unit success. Campbell, 1976; Andrews, 1976; Bestuzhey-Lada, 1980; Murrell et al., 1983; Verwayen, 1980; Glatzer, 1987; Moller, 1992; Rath & Harter, 2010).

Community living on high-quality military facilities has the potential to boost soldiers' esprit de corps and morale (Malaysian Army, 2011). It includes integration and participation in the community, as well as the availability of social support (National Research Council, 2002). These indicators contribute to their overall well-being and the command climate within the unit. (Flanagan, 1978; Bestuzhey-Lada, 1980; Murrell et al., 1983; Glatzer, 1987; Moller, 1992; Rath & Harter, 2010; Glatzer, 1987; Moller, 1992; Rath & Harter, 2010). Work-family conflict has been demonstrated to increase job turnover, increase sick leave (Hacker & Doolen, 2003), and result in decreased job work, as well as low family, community, and life satisfaction (Hassan, Dollard & Winefield, 2009).

Thus, the enhancement of family and friend aspects for a better environment is done through the enhancement of the service and social environment. Thus, a measure of officers' and soldiers' commitment to family and friends would show the command climate that enables them to carry out their tasks. However, the focus of this research is on the psychosocial aspects. This study excludes non-human indicators of combat readiness, such as the physical serviceability of military equipment. As a result, it is critical to measure soldiers' perceptions of various building blocks. Combat readiness is defined as the individual and/or collective state of mind of a soldier or a group of soldiers that affects their performance during military operations. This state of mind is determined by these soldiers' social trust and confidence, their worries and concerns, their familiarity with the enemy and the frontage, their morale, and their preconceptions of the opposing force. Confidence, social trust and morale are made up of various building blocks. Combat readiness can be conceptualised in terms of consisting of two interdependent dimensions i.e. the tangible and intangible elements.

### **Assessment of Psychological Intangibles**

Psychological evolves more on the soldier's mentality and mental state, particularly in difficult and unpredictable conditions. Adaptability, self-awareness, sense-making, warrior ethos, confidence, resilience, and moral-ethical judgement are all examples of intangibles used to describe psychological concepts that contribute to soldier mission readiness. Six statements about psychological factors are included below.

The term "hardiness" can be defined as "a personality trait indicating the courage and motivation to deal efficiently with daily challenges" (Vogt, Rizvi, Shipherd, & Resick, 2008, p. 61). With time and evolving perceptions and research in this subject, the term "hardiness" has been redefined as "accustomed to dealing with fatigue or hardships" ("Hardy," n.d., para. 3). This research pressures meticulously on a stronger consistent concept and its significance to other outcomes such as stressors, strains, social support, coping and performance (Bartone, 1999; Bartone, Roland, Picano, & Williams, 2008; Dolan, & Adler, 2006; Eschleman & Bowling, 2010; Maddi, Matthews, Kelly, Resurreccion, & Villarreal, 2010).

Contemporary research has established that hardiness may be developed in response to and for a variety of circumstances (Mosley & Laborde, 2016; Bartone, 2006; Bartone, Barry, & Armstrong, 2009; Maddi, 2007). As Maddi et al. (2010) highlight, hardiness has been define as "a special set of attitudes and skills that provide the courage, motivation, and strategies necessary for resilience and growth in difficult situations." Two types of study have been undertaken to support the idea that hardiness can be developed (Maddi, Harvey, Khoshaba, Fazel, & Resurreccion, 2009; Zach, Raviv, & Inbar, 2007). A study was done on the physical performance of 71 Israeli military officers to determine the effect of a

continuous training programme during stressful situations. The research examined the effects and measurement of hardiness on two occasions: at the start of the training under normal conditions and at the end under stressful conditions. The findings indicate that respondents enhanced their hardiness after undergone the training (Zach et al., 2007). Another study conducted on college students discovered that responders' hardiness increased after the training (Maddi et al., 2009). Both types of studies acknowledge that hardiness can be enhanced through the provision of appropriate training.

## **Research Methodology**

A meta-analysis of research on operational and combat readiness formulation of a systematic framework assessment tool and model for operational readiness for the Malaysian Army will be conducted by mix method both quantitative and qualitative. A meta-analysis of research on current operational and combat readiness of the Malaysian Army based on current doctrines and interviews with current top management of the Malaysian Army. Using past research on other major militaries of the world such as US Army, Australian Army, Canadian Army to understand the current concept of operational and combat readiness assessment framework and model to determine the best approach and practices currently employed by them.

Retrospective Interview Protocols with soldiers on combat duties in the field to determine what variables and factors are evident for combat readiness assessment framework and model to be used in the Malaysian army in the future based on current environment, situational awareness and military technologies. Questionnaires designed to determine the various variables and factors to determine the combat readiness assessment framework and model with approaches towards operational readiness for deployment and combat duties for the Malaysian Army. Focus group interviews with selected Senior and Junior Military Officers, Senior Non Commissioned Officers (SNCOs) and Junior Non Commissioned Officers (JNCOs).

## **Significance Of Research**

The significance of developing this model and assessment framework is consistent with Malaysia's National Defence Policy, which represents the country's ongoing commitment to strengthening national defence and modernising its Armed Forces (Malaysian National Defence Policy,2014). The conceptions of national power policy include military preparedness as a component of national power (Creswell,2014). The National Defense Policy represents the country's determination to protect its strategic interests and national security. It underlines the significance of maintaining a stable and secure environment for the nation and its people. The major goal of building the nation's defence capabilities is to create an integrated and balanced MAF comprised of assets and other defence resources. This principle concentrates on combat readiness and operational preparation within the Armed Forces organisation, as it encompasses not only combat forces but also the logistical support network of military-industrial cooperation in support of national development priorities.

Self-reliance, in this context, should not be restricted to military efforts alone but should involve all relevant government agencies and the people. Apart from the military, all other security agencies are critical to the country's development and stability, as well as to the Malaysian people. Malaysia, as an independent and sovereign state, recognises that the most effective means of defending its interests and national security are through the development of self-reliance and combat readiness, which is at the core of its defence policy. The combat readiness assessment tool will enable Malaysian security personnel and agencies to work collaboratively to prepare for any eventuality, especially in combat duties. Military spending is one area where there is no private solution to replace the public purse. No single corporation or group of citizens is sufficiently motivated (or trustworthy) enough to take financial responsibility for the cost of having a military. Adam Smith, one of the fathers of free-market economics, identified the defence of society as one of the primary functions of government and justification for reasonable taxation. The government is acting on behalf of the public to ensure that the military is sufficiently well resourced.

## **CONCLUSION**

National security is critical not only for the government, but for the entire country. National security fulfils a variety of functions. To begin, the armed forces are a critical component of national security. We live in a hazardous world, and the military's mission is to ensure the security of our country. That is why a robust national defence is critical to the nation's security and protection. The purpose of this research is to address the current assessment gap in security forces by proposing a systematic model and developing an assessment instrument for determining the combat readiness of all Malaysian security forces, including the Malaysian Army, the Royal Malaysian Air Force, the Royal Malaysian Navy, the Royal Malaysian Police, the Malaysian Maritime Enforcement Agency, and other relevant security forces. With a combat readiness assessment model in place, our combined security forces and agencies may work holistically and in unison to be prepared for every eventuality and ready for combat duties both domestic and international.

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