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Country or Family? Psychological Readiness of Indonesian Peacekeepers for Deployment in Conflict Zones

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Abstract

This study addresses the increasing psychological demands faced by Indonesian peacekeeping personnel assigned to conflict areas, where a complex operational environment has the potential to affect mental readiness and the effectiveness of mission execution. Although military preparation has traditionally emphasized physical and tactical competence, empirical evidence on psychological readiness before deployment remains limited. This study aims to describe the level of psychological readiness of Indonesian peacekeeping personnel in the pre-deployment phase and to identify factors related to adaptive readiness. The study used a quantitative descriptive survey design involving 515 military personnel undergoing pre-deployment training, with a structured questionnaire measuring cognitive, emotional, and behavioral readiness for anticipated operational stressors. The results show that the level of psychological readiness was generally in the moderate category with a mean score of 70.69, although most participants showed moderate to high readiness across various demographic characteristics. These findings indicate that pre-deployment training contributes positively to psychological adaptation but has not fully eliminated vulnerability to anticipated stressors. This study underscores the importance of structured preventive psychological preparation, including strategies for strengthening togetherness (*Bonding*) and involvement (*Engagement*), in order to increase resilience, strengthen mental readiness, and support the sustainability of peacekeeping mission performance.

Keywords: *peacekeeper readiness; psychological readines; mental health; pre-deployment training.*

1. Introduction

The increasing involvement of Indonesian military personnel in international peacekeeping missions has created new psychological demands that differ significantly from those of conventional military operations (*combat operations*). Peacekeepers operate in complex conflict environments characterized by uncertainty, isolation, role ambiguity, potential danger, and prolonged separation from family, all of which can affect psychological readiness before deployment (Rodrigues-Silveira et al., 2023; Carmona et al., 2024). This indicates that a person who is ready to enter military service will not always be ready for a military assignment. This is because readiness to become a member of the military does not automatically reflect an individual's psychological readiness to face *deployment*, since operational assignments present different psychosocial demands, including uncertainty, risk of danger, and prolonged social separation.

Although operational readiness has traditionally emphasized physical training and tactical competence, increasing attention is now directed at mental readiness as an important determinant of mission effectiveness and personnel well-being. Previous studies have shown that personnel assigned to peacekeeping missions experience higher levels of psychological stress than the general military population (Carmona et al., 2024; Gjerstad et al., 2020; Maguen et al., 2004; Bartone & Adler, 1998). However, systematic assessment of

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readiness in the pre-deployment phase remains limited. This condition indicates a knowledge gap regarding how psychological readiness is distributed among peacekeepers before they enter conflict areas and how preparation factors contribute to that readiness.

In Indonesia, the military, known as the Indonesian National Armed Forces (Tentara Nasional Indonesia, abbreviated TNI), according to recent related research, includes mental evaluation in the selection of TNI soldiers as a strategic component of operational readiness. However, it should be noted, as at the beginning, that the involvement of Indonesian military personnel in international peacekeeping missions has created new psychological demands that differ significantly from those of conventional military operations (*combat operations*). This is because of the difference whereby combat operations are characterized by clear identification of the enemy and clearly defined mission objectives, whereas *peacekeeping operations* place military personnel in situations of role ambiguity, moral dilemmas, and chronic uncertainty, which ultimately produce sustained psychological pressure that can exceed the cognitive and emotional demands of conventional combat operations (Britt, Adler & Castro, 2006).

Theoretically, psychological readiness in the context of military membership can be understood through stress adaptation theory, resilience theory, and the concept of work engagement, which explain how individuals prepare themselves cognitively, emotionally, and behaviorally to face demanding environments. Stress adaptation theory holds that anticipating stressors enables individuals to develop coping mechanisms before exposure occurs (Meichenbaum, 1985), whereas resilience theory emphasizes an individual's capacity to maintain functioning amid adversity (Apriani et al., 2025). In addition, work engagement theory holds that interpersonal cohesion and meaningful involvement in tasks can act as protective factors that reduce psychological pressure and improve adaptive performance (Britt et al., 2001).

Although global discussion of mental health in peacekeeping operations is fairly extensive, empirical studies that specifically focus on Indonesian peacekeepers at the pre-deployment stage remain limited. Several studies on Indonesian peacekeepers have focused more on force preparation policy, operational capacity, and defense diplomacy (Asmoro et al., 2024; Pertiwi et al., 2025; Zaesohar et al., 2024). Empirical studies that specifically examine the psychological readiness of individual soldiers at the pre-deployment stage remain relatively limited, so the aspect of psychological adaptation before deployment has not been explored systematically.

Most existing research emphasizes post-deployment psychological impact rather than preventive assessment before deployment. The military psychology literature has historically highlighted post-deployment psychological consequences, such as post-traumatic stress disorder and reintegration difficulties, more than preventive assessment before deployment (Adler et al., 2011; Hoge et al., 2004). Efforts to identify protective factors and pre-deployment psychological readiness have only developed in more recent research (Britt et al., 2001). Therefore, the novelty of this study lies in its focus on describing psychological readiness before deployment using stressor-based dimensions relevant to the context of peacekeeping missions and in viewing readiness as a preventive psychological indicator rather than a post-mission consequence.

Based on this conceptual framework, this study hypothesizes that peacekeepers show a tendency toward a certain level of psychological readiness, and that the discussion in this article will accordingly offer *bonding* and *engagement* strategies to achieve higher psychological readiness before deployment.

The purpose of this study is to describe the level of psychological readiness of Indonesian peacekeepers in the pre-deployment phase and to examine how that readiness reflects adaptive preparation for anticipated mission stressors. This study also aims to provide empirical evidence that can support the development of structured psychological preparation programs to improve resilience and mission effectiveness, one of which is *bonding* and *engagement*.

2. Method

This study used a quantitative approach with a descriptive aim, in the form of a survey, to examine the psychological readiness of Indonesian peacekeepers before deployment to conflict areas. The survey technique used a questionnaire distributed online via *Google Form*. From this questionnaire, the main variable studied was psychological readiness in peacekeeping missions, conceptualized as an individual's cognitive, emotional, and behavioral readiness to face anticipated operational stressors, divided into 3 items directed at personal readiness, the personnel's family readiness, and mission assignment readiness, and 10 items based on readiness to face 5 stressors, namely isolation, ambiguity, powerlessness, danger, and boredom (Shigemura & Nomura, 2002; Murti, 2025).

Readiness was analyzed through several dimensions representing common stressors in peacekeeping missions, including perceived isolation, role ambiguity, feelings of powerlessness, perceived danger, and boredom management. With a total of 13 items, responses on a 7-point scale were summed, and the mean was then used to stratify readiness from low to high.

The research subjects consisted of 515 Indonesian military personnel undergoing pre-deployment training (*Pre-Deployment Training*, PDT) before being placed in international peacekeeping missions. Participants were selected using *purposive sampling* with the criterion of active military personnel who were preparing for or participating in a PDT program.

Descriptive statistical analysis was used, including frequency distributions, percentage analysis, calculation of mean values, and cross-tabulation based on demographic variables such as sex, marital status, psychiatric clinical history, nicotine use (*Nicotine User*), alcohol use (*Alcohol Drinker*), and mission experience.

3. Results

3.1 Descriptive Test

The research sample of 515 people undergoing *Pre-Deployment Training* yielded the following descriptive results:

Table 1. *Demographic Characteristics of the Research Sample (N=515)*

No	Demographic Factor	Classification	Frequency	
			Number	Percent
1	Sex	Male	504	97.9%
		Female	11	2.1%
2	Marital Status	Married	374	72.6%
		Not married	141	27.4%
3	Psychiatric Clinical History	Has a psychiatric clinical history	4	0.8%
		No psychiatric clinical history	511	99.2%
4	Nicotine User	Active smoker	225	43.7%
		Not an active smoker	290	56.3%
5	Alcohol Drinker	Alcohol drinker	10	1.9%
		Not an alcohol drinker	505	98.1%
6	Mission Experience	First-time experience	492	95.5%
		Not first-time experience	23	4.5%

From the frequency table above, it can be seen that in the sex classification the sample was dominated by males at 97.9%. In marital status, the sample was dominated by those who were married at 72.6%. In psychiatric clinical history, the sample was dominated by those without a psychiatric clinical history at 99.2%. In nicotine use, the sample was dominated by non-active smokers at 56.3%. In alcohol use, the sample was dominated by non-alcohol drinkers at 98.1%, and in mission experience, the sample was dominated by those for whom the PDT assignment was their first mission of being prepared for conflict areas as a *Peacekeeper*, at 95.5%.

Table 2. *Readiness Levels by Demographic Factors (N=515)*

No	Demographic Factor	Classification	Readiness Level		
			Low (%)	Moderate (%)	High (%)
1	Sex	Male	2 (0.4%)	201 (39.9%)	301 (59.7%)
		Female	0 (0.0%)	5 (45.5%)	6 (54.5%)
		Total	**2 (0.4%)**	**206 (40.0%)**	**307 (59.6%)**
2	Marital Status	Married	2 (0.5%)	163 (43.6%)	209 (55.9%)
		Not married	0 (0.0%)	43 (30.5%)	98 (69.5%)
		Total	**2 (0.4%)**	**206 (40.0%)**	**307 (59.6%)**
3	Psychiatric Clinical History	Has a psychiatric clinical history	0 (0.0%)	2 (50.0%)	2 (50.0%)
		No psychiatric clinical history	2 (0.4%)	204 (39.9%)	305 (59.7%)
		Total	**2 (0.4%)**	**206 (40.0%)**	**307 (59.6%)**
4	Nicotine User	Active smoker	0 (0.0%)	78 (34.7%)	147 (65.3%)
		Not an active smoker	2 (0.7%)	128 (44.1%)	160 (55.2%)
		Total	**2 (0.4%)**	**206 (40.0%)**	**307 (59.6%)**
5	Alcohol Drinker	Alcohol drinker	1 (10.0%)	3 (30.0%)	6 (60.0%)
		Not an alcohol drinker	1 (0.2%)	203 (40.2%)	301 (59.6%)
		Total	**2 (0.4%)**	**206 (40.0%)**	**307 (59.6%)**
6	Mission Experience	First-time experience	2 (0.4%)	196 (39.8%)	294 (59.8%)
		Not first-time experience	0 (0.0%)	10 (43.5%)	13 (56.5%)
		Total	**2 (0.4%)**	**206 (40.0%)**	**307 (59.6%)**

From the frequency table above, it can be seen that by sex category, 59.7% of males (n=301) had high readiness, 39.9% (n=201) had moderate readiness, and 0.4% (n=2) had low readiness. Meanwhile, 54.5% of females (n=6) had high readiness and 45.5% (n=5) had moderate readiness.

By marital status category, among those who already have a family, 55.9% (n=209) were at a high level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, 43.6% (n=163) were at a moderate level of readiness, and 0.5% (n=2) were at a low level of readiness. Among those who do not yet have a family, 69.5% (n=98) were at a high level of readiness and 30.5% (n=43) were at a moderate level of readiness.

By mission experience category, among those for whom this PDT was their first experience, 59.8% (n=294) were at a high level of readiness, 39.8% (n=196) were at a moderate level of readiness, and 0.4% (n=2) had low readiness. Meanwhile, among those for whom this PDT was not their first experience, 56.5% (n=13) had high readiness and 43.5% (n=10) had moderate readiness.

In addition, there are the categories of Psychiatric Clinical History, Nicotine Use (*Nicotine User*), and Alcohol Use (*Alcohol Drinker*). In Psychiatric Clinical History, among those with a psychiatric clinical history, 50.0% (n=2) were at a high level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, 50.0% (n=2) were at a moderate level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, and none were at a low level of readiness. Meanwhile, among those without a psychiatric clinical history, 59.7% (n=305) were at a high level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, 39.9% (n=204) were at a moderate level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, and 0.4% (n=2) had a low level of readiness.

In Nicotine Use, among active smokers, 65.3% (n=147) had a high level of readiness, 34.7% (n=78) were at a moderate level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, and none were at a low level of readiness. In Alcohol Use, among alcohol drinkers, 60% (n=6) were at a high level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, 30% (n=3) were at a moderate level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission, and 10% (n=1) were at a low level of readiness for the peacekeeping mission.

Table 3. *Overall Readiness Level Results (N = 515)*

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items	Mean
0.629	13	70.69

From the table above, the overall readiness level of Indonesian peacekeepers has a mean readiness score of 70.69. The findings show that Indonesian peacekeepers generally have a moderate level of psychological readiness before deployment, with a large proportion in the high readiness category. This result indicates that pre-deployment training contributes positively to preparatory adaptation, but the moderate readiness score also indicates the continued presence of psychological vulnerability.

4. Discussion

This study aimed to examine the psychological readiness of Indonesian peacekeepers in the pre-deployment phase as part of a preventive approach in military psychology. The results show that, in general, the level of psychological readiness of personnel was in the moderate category, with the largest proportion at a high level of readiness. This finding indicates that the preparation process before deployment has been able to build basic mental readiness, but has not fully produced optimal readiness in all personnel (Adler et al., 1998). In other words, psychological readiness before deployment is a dynamic condition still in the process of adaptation, not a static final state.

From the perspective of stress adaptation theory, readiness at a moderate level can be understood as the result of a process of anticipating stressors that have not yet been fully experienced directly. Anticipation enables individuals to build early coping strategies through simulated experience and cognitive expectations of mission demands (Meichenbaum, 1985). However, without real exposure to the operational environment, individuals remain in the phase of secondary appraisal, that is, the stage of evaluating one's own ability to face a perceived threat. This condition explains why pre-deployment psychological readiness tends not to reach a maximum level even though training has been carried out intensively.

The dominance of the high readiness category among most respondents indicates that pre-deployment training functions as a *stress inoculation* mechanism, that is, a process of building psychological tolerance through controlled exposure to stress. Collective training enables individuals to develop a sense of competence, situational control, and self-efficacy that contribute to readiness to face operational uncertainty (Meichenbaum, 1985). In the context of peacekeeping operations, which are characterized by role ambiguity and mandate complexity, the ability to manage uncertainty is a more important indicator of adaptive readiness than physical or technical readiness alone.

Analysis by demographic characteristics shows that differences in psychological readiness between groups were relatively small. The consistency of readiness levels between males and females indicates that organizational factors and training experience have a more dominant influence than individual characteristics

based on gender (Rosen et al., 1999). This finding reinforces the view that a structured military environment creates relatively uniform standards of psychological adaptation through the training system and the socialization of organizational values.

The more visible difference in readiness by marital status indicates that external psychosocial factors also play a role in the process of mental readiness. Personnel who are married may face role conflict between family responsibilities and job demands, which can increase cognitive load before departure. Anticipation of prolonged separation and concern for the family are stressors typical of the pre-deployment phase that often do not appear in formal operational training. As reported by military.com (2011), drawing on the views of Pincus et al. (2001), the pre-deployment phase is characterized by the emergence of concern for the family and anticipatory emotional pressure that often are not the main focus of military operational training. Recent research also shows that deployment is closely related to family dynamics and to the need for special preparation for families and personnel, not only military operational training (Wesemann et al., 2024). This finding underscores the importance of considering the family dimension as part of psychological readiness interventions in the military.

Interestingly, previous deployment experience was not a dominant factor in determining psychological readiness. Personnel undertaking their first mission still showed a high level of readiness, which indicates that direct experience is not the only source of psychological adaptation. Pre-deployment training appears to function as a substitute mechanism for experience through simulation and internalization of operational scenarios. This supports the indirect experiential learning approach (*vicarious learning*) in the formation of mental readiness (Lokyan et al., 2025).

The absence of striking differences by psychological clinical history or certain consumption habits can be interpreted as an effect of the strict military selection and *screening* system. Thus, variation in psychological readiness more likely reflects a process of situational adaptation than prior mental health conditions. This finding shifts the focus of analysis from individual risk factors to organization- and training-environment-based protective factors.

Conceptually, the results of this study are in line with work engagement theory, which emphasizes that meaningful involvement in tasks and interpersonal cohesion increase an individual's adaptive capacity. Joint training has the potential to strengthen collective identity and a sense of shared purpose that serve as sources of intrinsic motivation in facing the demands of peacekeeping missions (Breslau et al., 2016). In peacekeeping operations, where the boundary between conflict and non-conflict situations is often unclear, engagement with the meaning of the task becomes an important mechanism of psychological stabilization.

Furthermore, the findings of this study strengthen the argument that the military psychology literature has so far offered more curative approaches based on post-deployment impact than preventive approaches before deployment (Bøg et al., 2018; Fertout et al., 2011; Vitzthum et al., 2009). By focusing the analysis on the pre-deployment phase, this study shows that psychological readiness can serve as an early indicator for identifying the need for psychological support before individuals are directly exposed to operational stress. This approach shifts the paradigm from reactive intervention to readiness-based prevention strategies.

Overall, the results affirm that psychological readiness is not merely an individual attribute but the product of an interaction between training, the organizational social context, and the individual's interpretation of the meaning of the task. Therefore, strengthening the psychological aspects of pre-deployment training has

strategic potential to improve operational adaptation while minimizing the risk of psychological pressure during peacekeeping missions.

5. Conclusion

This study shows that Indonesian peacekeepers at the pre-deployment stage have a level of psychological readiness that is generally in the moderate category with a predominance of high readiness. This readiness reflects a process of mental adaptation formed through pre-deployment training and the dynamics of organizational interaction. The relatively small variation in readiness across individual characteristics indicates that psychological readiness is influenced more by situational and collective factors than by personal factors alone. These findings underscore the importance of viewing psychological readiness as a preventive component in the peacekeeping mission preparation system.

6. Recommendations

Pre-deployment training programs are recommended to integrate psychological readiness components more systematically through an experience-based approach, simulation of operational stress, and strengthening of group cohesion. A preventive approach that focuses on increasing personnel engagement and social support has the potential to improve adaptive readiness before deployment. Future research is expected to use a longitudinal design to examine changes in psychological readiness from the pre-deployment phase to the post-deployment phase so that the dynamics of personnel adaptation can be understood more comprehensively.

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