

Evolution of Leadership in Esprit De Corps:

Evidence from military organization

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Abstract—Military problems throughout the world are the presence of members in their units. The presence of personnel in units, especially in carrying out basic tasks, is in the military. Absence without permission, or called desertion, is considered illegal, which is one of the crimes regulated by law. Esprit de corps is the unit spirit which functions as a member of the unit. Esprit de corps was built since the recruitment process. Leadership plays an important role in maintaining esprit de corps unit strength. The unit's adherence to its members is expected to be able to suppress the intention of deserting unit members. This quantitative study aims to empirically determine what factors directly influence member desertion intentions. By using the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) estimation technique on 300 respondents who are Navy soldiers, the results show that esprit de corps is the most significant variable to reduce desertion intentions. Indicators of more unit values provide the most powerful influence in explaining esprit de corps. Leadership is also like that but not as strong as esprit de corps. What's interesting is the influence of leadership is very strong against esprit de corps. Attention to members through direct communication is a very strong indicator of leadership in increasing unit esprit de corps.

Keywords—*leadership; esprit de corps; desertion intention; recruitment*

I. INTRODUCTION

The presence of members in units is the most important thing for military units throughout the world. Killed in battle or duty and running away from the unit is a situation of loss of members in units. Therefore, attendance becomes a priority in military organizations which have the main task of maintaining and upholding the sovereignty of the State. Members of the military or soldiers must be professionals as capital in winning every task they carry out. Professionals need an intense physical presence as part of the process of improving skills in their duties. In military life, the absence of permission at a place and the time determined for him where he is supposed to be in service is a crime. Crimes which constitute a criminal offense contain legal consequences with the threat of imprisonment or imprisonment. The threat of punishment is more severe if carried out during the war.

Deserters defined as cowards in wartime are often judged by their units with death executions [1]. The handling of

desertion is very important because soldiers who separate themselves from units are not only detrimental to the unit but can also destroy units if the deserters run away and join the opposing unit (coward). According to research conducted by Woodbury, that desertion motives are due to undisciplined, dissatisfaction with unit treatment, lack of loyalty and problems of poverty [2]. The influence of leadership and the spirit of patriotism on desertion intentions, this occurred in the Canadian war between America and Great Britain (England) in 1812 [3]. Unjust treatment within the military also triggers considerable desertion and leadership is crucial [4]. Hardiness with commitment indicators (Esprit de corps) and stress coping with indicators of the ability to cope with stress will affect the stress level that ends desertion, this occurs in the Indonesian Navy Cadet [5]. In the period of 2013 - 2015, SAA (Syrian Arab Army) had experienced chaos by the high rate of military desertion caused by the low esprit de corps of soldiers due to stress and mental stress [6]. Not a number or power that brings victory in war; But any army entering the battle becomes stronger because of the soul (moral combat) [7]. Colombia's internal security is an illustration, a long-standing conflict as one of the reasons for the existence of defectors (rebels) from the escape of their armed forces. The conflict from 1958 to 2012 claimed victims of no less than 220,000 died (80% of civilians), 5 million were displaced. Thus placing Colombia as the highest country in the country due to the internal conflict under Syria [8].

Countries in a peaceful situation with deserters have an invisible impact, but in a situation where domestic security is not conducive (armed conflict occurs), desertion can endanger national security. Criminal acts of desertion within the Indonesian Army often occur as well, with the reason that they vary from unit internal problems to the influence of outside development of the environment. There is no exception Indonesian Navy intentions or intentions of personnel to carry out desertions always occur, this can be seen from the number of criminal violations from 2012 to 2016 which in the Navy organization tends to increase. On one side the recruitment was carried out very tightly and transparently with very high interest, no more than 5% (five percent) of the number of applicants who passed were accepted as soldiers, but after being educated to become soldiers and active service in units,

the intention of desertion was quite high (the desire to separate from the unit).

The study was conducted in the Indonesian Navy with an enlisted sample of 300 soldiers, focusing on the emergence of desertion intentions. How strong the influence of leadership and esprit de corps on desertion intentions in peacetime is the aim of this study so that the issue of desertion intention finds answers and high public interest in being a soldier is in accordance with the actual situation. The strong leadership character of a leader and a supportive work environment can encourage a soldier to be loyal to unity (esprit de corps). The strong sense of belonging to unity can reduce the potential for desertion.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

A. *Desertion Intention*

Intention refers to the tendency of a person to act or behave in a certain way [9]. The presence of social influence as a reference and an intense learning process influences the speed of intention into action [10]. The intention of a person is influenced by certain motives, which is mainly driven from within (internal) and the environment (external), which ultimately affects performance [11]. Desertion itself is basically an absence without the official permission of the superior from where they should have been assigned. Moreover, desertion is also defined as the disappearance or abandonment of a duty [12]. Furthermore, desertion under Article 87 of the Criminal Procedure Code is defined as an absence for more than thirty days during the peace situation, and for more than four days during the war. The main characteristic of desertion is the absence without permission from where soldiers should have been delivering military services.

Deserters would be sentenced a maximum two years and eight months imprisonment during the peace situation and eight years and six months imprisonment for deserters during the war. It is called desertion based on two indicators, the first one is the absence, and the second one is a period of absence that exceeds the time limit constituted by the law. Therefore, desertion is basically mental and intentional desire to separate from the military unit.

B. *Leadership*

Leadership is a crucial part of management, but it is not the whole scopes. The primary role of the leader is to influence others to achieve commonly defined goals. Managers also plan activities, organize appropriate structures, and control resources [13]. Leadership can also be expressed as a mean to deliver direction, alignment, and commitment needed by individuals to work together productively toward collective outcome [14]. Moreover, leadership is also defined as a process of influencing, motivating, and enabling other people to contribute to the effectiveness and success of the organizations in which they are members [15], including those who are required to achieve the desired result. It involves developing and communicating a vision for the future, motivating people, and securing their engagement [16]. Furthermore, leadership is

also defined as the process of influencing others to understand and agree about what needs to be done and how to do it, and the process of facilitating individuals and collective efforts to accomplish shared objectives [17] and the process of influencing is the other facilities of attainment of organizationally relevant goals [18]. Every single organization, including military, must be ready for any uncertain changes, and those changes can only be anticipated by leadership to trigger change initiative [19].

It is stated that military leadership has similarity with civil leadership [20]. The military leaders must be visionary officers who are able to respond to future challenges. Therefore, any levels of military officers are equipped with leadership knowledge both theory and practice. Being religious, visionary, technocratic, and international-engaged are special characteristics desired by the Armed Forces organization.

Leadership style is widely diverse and is strongly influenced by the personality of a leader [21]. Leadership is "something to build", not much different from investment. Investing in leadership would allow someone to express they are interested and care about people they are speaking with military members, therefore emphasizing mindfulness as performance and increase personnel's loyalty within the military units [22]. Without a strong personality, the process of influencing other people will not certainly be achieved and neither the ultimate goals of the organization. Indicators of all of these include ideal influences, individual attention, decision making, and inspirational motivation.

C. *Esprit De Corps*

The term Esprit de Corps was first introduced by the General and Emperor of France Napoleon Bonaparte, where during the war, soldiers must help each other, protect, and defend the honour of members of the army. The spirit that inspires enthusiasm, dedication, and a strong respect for pride [23]. Achieving common goals is interrelated in organizations [24]. Being in the upper ranks make them feel different or better than others, and that organizations are more important than individuals [25]. Esprit de corps is also defined as the phenomenon of the individual group which is based on the enthusiasm within the organization [26]. This Esprit de corps will make leaders aware that there is a relationship between leadership and work morale, and contingency-situational approach is needed to improve it [27]. Major General John A. Lejeune the legendary United States Marine Corps (USMC) described esprit de corps as dealing with "the spirit, the human soul." He noted that esprit "cannot be felt by the five senses but however, every leader knows it is the most powerful force that must be achieved for victory" [28].

In general, working in a team with high esprit de corps will drive higher productivity, working performance, and organizational progress. Spirit serves as the most distinctive power to achieve victory, a belief that value of the organization triggers a different feeling or even better than the others, and therefore the team would work effectively and praise the organization more. Esprit de Corps has an indicator: pride, the team works effectively and the value of the organization.

D. Leadership and Desertion Intention

Leadership has consequences for the emergence of subordinate bad intentions to leave the unit intentionally. Maneuvered leadership in the treatment of leaders towards subordinates directly affects the level of intention to desert subordinates. The importance of the issue of desertion crime encourages academics to scientifically explain whether there is an influence of leadership on desertion intentions. Previous research stated that unit morale was high so soldier retention was also high, unit morale was built by strong leadership [29], strong control of the commander and distance of original residence affected the desertion rate, and the farther the area of origin of the soldier also caused a tendency to desertion intention soldiers [9]. The main motives for desertion intentions include disciplinary aspects, characteristics/characteristics of members, dissatisfaction with the prevailing treatment in the military, dissatisfaction with the military environment (unity), lack of loyalty, problems of poverty, and dependence on beverages and drugs [2].

E. Esprit De Corps and Desertion Intention

Esprit de corps as identity or mental attitude of personnel (unit members), will ultimately determine their behaviour as an embodiment of the attitude and identity of the unit as a whole. The mental attitude of the soldier maintains himself in close unity with his organization and is willing to sacrifice with all the resources available to achieve organizational/unitary goals to make desertion intentions recede from the soldier's mind. Maintaining a soldier's morale to maintain and improve esprit de corps will be able to reduce soldier's desertion intentions [30]. Emotional attachment as an indicator of esprit de corps has a strong influence on the level of desertion intention of soldiers [31]. In the civil war in Syria, there were many desertions due to psychological social factors, more because of morality. Also because of fears, concerns about self-safety and finally some due to defecting opposition forces [32].

F. Leadership and Esprit De Corps

In leadership compilation is a process of social influence to move individuals and groups toward achieving goals, understanding the organization's vision of all members and being able to decipher into performance-based actions. A relationship, contrary to the property of an individual so that leadership exists, only where followers exist, and its effectiveness varies directly with the level of trust that exists in the relationship. Leadership that unites with members and their units will provide strong cohesion for all members to create a strong esprit de corps as well. Leadership influences performance both directly and through increasing esprit de corps [33]. Spiritual leadership directly influences spiritual well-being or esprit de corps [34]. The high quality of leadership will encourage an increase in soldier's mentality and loyalty. High spirits and hearts as strong as steel then make warriors win the war [35].

The importance of the issue of desertion crime encourages academics to scientifically explain what facts can influence desertion intentions. Previous research stated that the strong control of the commander and the distance of the original residence affect the level of desertion, the farther away from

the area of origin of the soldier the higher the level of the tendency for desertion intention [9]. The unit morale is high so that the retention of soldiers is also high, unit morale is built by strong leadership [29]. Leadership influences performance both directly and through increasing esprit de corps [33]. Spiritual leadership directly influences spiritual well-being or esprit de corps [34]. Emotional attachment as an indicator of esprit de corps has a strong influence on the level of desertion intention of soldiers [31]. From the description of the results of previous research and theoretical studies and the current state of conditions that leadership variables and esprit de corps as independent variables that may influence desertion intentions, hypotheses can be arranged as follows:

- H1. Leadership has a direct negative effect on desertion intention.
- H2. Esprit de Corps has a negative direct effect on desertion intention.
- H3. Leadership has a direct positive effect on the Esprit de Corps.

The research hypothesis above is illustrated in the theoretical model as shown below.

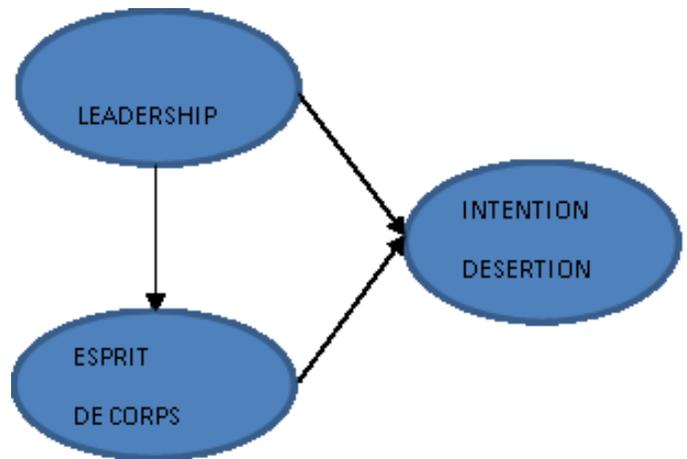


Fig. 1. Research model.

III. METHOD

The estimation technique used in this study is Structural Equation Modelling (SEM). In this study, testing of factor loads or better known as construct validity in the measurement model was carried out using the LISREL 8.8 software. Validity test is done by calculating the t-value with a significance level of 5% (the benchmark p-value is smaller than 5%, or the t-value is greater than 1.96). A pre-test was carried out to ensure that the factors used could be indicators of each variable using 30 respondents. The data used in this study are primary data, with a sample size of 300 enlisted obtained through calculation of Slovin formula. The profile of respondents with a service period of fewer than 4 years is 15%, 5-8 years is 4%, 9-16 years is 47%, 17-24 is 29%, and service > 24 years is 5% of the total respondents. After the questionnaire was declared valid and reliable through validity and reliability testing in the pre-test process, then the next SEM estimation technique was used,

by testing the suitability of the model, including validity and reliability of the construct. After conducting a model match test, then analyse the causal relationship [36].

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first step in processing data is to pre-test the questionnaire to make sure the data is valid and reliable. A Pre-test was carried out on 30 respondents who were randomly selected to test item items which were indicators of all variables or constructs, the total number of items was 77 questions. The results of the validity and reliability test on 77 questions there are two questions that are invalid and must be dropped, namely one item on the variable quality of work life and one item on the esprit de corps variable. Furthermore, 75 valid and reliable items were used as questionnaires to the actual sample of 300 enlisted. Data collected as primary data was processed using the Lisrel 8.8 application. The results of model compatibility test or confirmatory factor analysis are Goodness of Fit (GFI) = 0.41, adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI) = 0.35, Root Mean Square Residual (RMSR) = 0.0041, Normed Fit Index (NFI) = 0.83, Incremental Fit Index (IFI) = 0.85. In general, the suitability of the model is marginal fit, except RMSR that shows good fit.

Next is the analysis of the coefficient of determination to show how much the ability of exogenous latent variables explains changes in endogenous latent variables. The processed products using the Lisrel 8.8 application show the determination coefficient values for each model are as follows:

$$E = 0.63 * L, \text{ Errorvar.} = 0.61, R^2 = 0.39$$

$$\begin{matrix} (0.075) & (0.11) \\ 8.40 & 5.35 \end{matrix}$$

$$D = -0.29 * E - 0.28 * L, \text{ Errorvar.} = 0.74, R^2 = 0.26$$

$$\begin{matrix} (0.074) & (0.071) & (0.11) \\ -3.87 & -3.91 & 7.05 \end{matrix}$$

Based on the results of data processing in the structural model for the coefficient of determination above, it can be concluded that: Changes in the influence of leadership on Esprit de Corps shows the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.39 or 39%. This means that changes in the Esprit de Corps variable can be explained by Leadership by 39%, while 61% are factors that are not part of the model. The Influence of Leadership and Esprit de Corps on desertion intention shows the coefficient of determination (R^2) of 0.26 or 26%. This shows that changes in desertion intention are explained by leadership and Esprit de Corps of 26%, while 74% are factors that are not part of the model. Indicators that have a strong influence on leadership constructs are indicators of individual attention. Respect and accept differences and the existence (L9) of direct communication with subordinates (L13) is a questionnaire that receives the most answers from respondents. Whereas for the esprit de corps construct indicators that have the highest loading factor are indicators of organizational value. The unit is a part of life (E13), the unit creates high self-

confidence (E14), and the unit helps find solutions to each problem that exists (E15).

To test the hypothesis, the significance of the relationship between variables looks like the processed Lisrel 8.8 below.

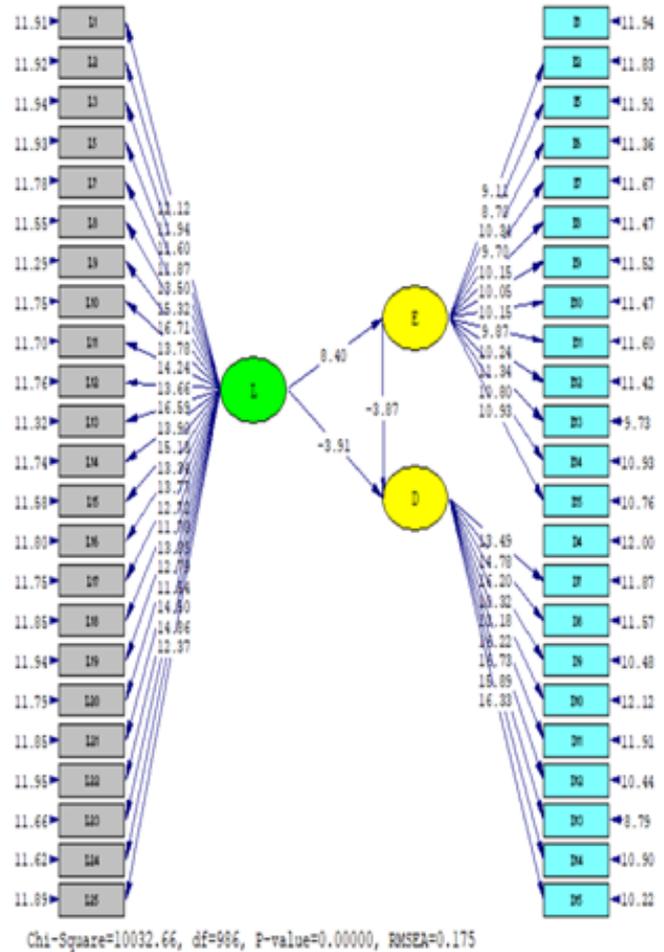


Fig. 2. Output of t-value.

Source: Lisrel 8.8 Output Data.

This study uses six hypotheses, where the analysis of hypothesis testing uses a significance level of 5% or equivalent t-value of + 1.96. If the value of t-value > 1.96, then H_0 will be rejected, which means that the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is accepted. However, if the t-value is < 1.96, it indicates that H_0 is not rejected, so the alternative hypothesis (H_a) is not accepted. Summary of the findings is exhibited by the following table.

TABLE I. HYPOTHESIS TESTING RESULT

Variables	Hypothesis Statement	T-Value	Significance
H ₁	Leadership influences Desertion Intention.	-3.91	Significant
H ₂	Esprit de Corps influences Desertion Intention	-3.87	Significant
H ₃	Leadership influences Esprit de Corps	8.40	Significant

Source: Author's Tabulation (2019).

V. CONCLUSION

According to the result of the empirical analysis, esprit de corps plays a very strategic role to directly reduce the intention of deserting members of the Navy. Leadership has a positive and significant impact on esprit de corps, where esprit de corps is what will ultimately reduce the potential for a criminal offense of desertion in the future. The importance of leadership aspect can also be seen from the direct impact of leadership on desertion intentions, where the higher quality of Navy leaders leadership, the lower the potential of desertion (desertion intention).

Some efforts to realize effective leadership is also crucial. It is done by the presence of individual attention from superiors, creating inspirational motivation, effective decision making, and ideal influence or role models from leaders. Therefore, military superior leadership is one factor to create strong esprit de corps, and with the strong esprit de corps, desertion intention can be gradually suppressed.

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