

Persuasive Communication Strategies of Leaders in Reducing Serious Disciplinary Violations Among Soldiers (Multi-Site Study at the Signal Battalion of Pushubad and Battalion 21 Group 2 Kopassus)

Eka Indri Widarti, Astriana Baiti Sinaga
Universitas Muhammadiyah Jakarta, Indonesia
Email: ekaindriwidarti1995@gmail.com, astri01@yahoo.com

ABSTRACT

In essence, the leadership culture in military organizations is instructive and authoritarian with one command center. This study aims to determine, compare and synthesize leadership persuasive communication strategies in suppressing the level of soldier discipline offenses in Yonhub Pushubad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus. The method used in this research is a qualitative method and a descriptive approach with a multi-site study at the Yonhub Pushubad and the Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus. Primary and secondary data collection techniques through in-depth interviews, participant observation and documentation. Based on the analysis and discussion of all the findings and data collected, it was concluded that the leaders of Yonhub Pushubad applied psychodynamic, psychocultural and the meaning construction persuasive communication strategies to reduce the number of infringements among its soldiers. On the other hand, the leaders of Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus also applied the same three persuasive communication strategies to minimize the number of transgressions by its soldiers. From the description of the results of the study, it can be concluded that the leaders of Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus are more persuasive than the leaders of the Yonhub Pushubad, as can be seen from the variety and effectiveness of the communication strategies applied in controlling the discipline of its members. This is also evidenced by the percentage of offenses by soldiers of Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus which is smaller than Yonhub Pushubad from 2018 to 2021.

Keywords: *Military Organization, Soldier Discipline Offense, Persuasive Communication Strategy, Multi-Site Study*

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INTRODUCTION

Communication is an important process in human life that cannot be separated from social interaction. In the context of organizations, communication plays a role as a means of conveying messages, instructions, and forming understanding between individuals and groups. Effective communication not only conveys information, but is also able to influence the attitude, perception, and behavior of communicators. Therefore, communication strategies are an essential component that must be carefully designed. A communication strategy includes planning and managing messages so that communication goals are achieved optimally. In Effendy's (2013) perspective, a communication strategy is a series of concrete and structured actions to influence the audience with a systematic approach, including the use of communication techniques tailored to the situation and characteristics of the recipient.

One form of communication strategy that is often used to influence behavior is persuasive communication. Persuasive communication aims to raise awareness and encourage change in attitudes or behaviors without coercion, so that individuals voluntarily accept the message conveyed. Tubbs and Moss (in Rakhmat, 2008) emphasized that one of the characteristics of effective communication is its ability to influence communicative attitudes.

This strategy is particularly relevant in military organizations, where discipline and adherence to rules are indicators of professionalism. Leaders in military organizations have a strategic role in building effective communication so that each soldier carries out their duties according to the organization's standards.

The biggest challenge faced by military organizations such as the *Tentara Nasional Indonesia Angkatan Darat (TNI AD)* is to maintain the professionalism of soldiers in dealing with the complexity of tasks and minimize disciplinary violations. A military organizational culture that is hierarchical, formal, and tends to be instructive requires a proper communication approach from a leader. Although direct instruction is a major character in military leadership, the application of persuasive communication strategies can be an effective alternative to shaping the moral awareness of soldiers, particularly in terms of adherence to regulations (Anderson, 2018; Hartono, 2020; Rachman, 2021; Sukmawati & Putra, 2022; Widodo, 2023; Yuliana et al., 2019; Zamroni, 2021).

The *Pushubad* Transportation Battalion and the 21st Battalion Group 2 *Kopassus* are two operational units under the command of the Indonesian Army that have a complex organizational structure and strategic tasks. Based on internal data, the two battalions had experienced a fairly high level of serious violations in 2018–2019, with the number of violations in *Yonhub Pushubad* reaching 7% and in *Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus* around 4%. However, in the following two years, namely 2020 and 2021, there was a significant decrease in violations, to only 1–2% in each unit. This decrease indicates a positive change in the discipline and professionalism of soldiers, which is inseparable from the role of unit leaders in building effective communication with their members (Alamsyah, 2019; Fadillah & Pratama, 2021; Hidayat, 2020; Kurniawan & Setiawan, 2022; Pratomo, 2023; Suryadi, 2019; Wibowo et al., 2020).

Military organizations worldwide face persistent challenges in maintaining discipline among soldiers, with disciplinary violations posing significant threats to operational effectiveness and institutional integrity. Reports from the U.S. Department of Defense (2021) indicate over 20,000 documented cases of misconduct annually, underscoring the global scale of this issue. Similar trends are observed in other nations, where breaches of military discipline range from minor infractions to severe offenses, often undermining unit cohesion and public trust. These recurring problems highlight the need for innovative leadership approaches that go beyond traditional punitive measures to address the root causes of disciplinary lapses.

In Indonesia, the *TNI AD* has grappled with comparable challenges, as evidenced by internal data revealing disciplinary violation rates of 7% in the *Pushubad* Signal Battalion and 4% in Battalion 21 Group 2 *Kopassus* during 2018–2019 (*TNI AD* Internal Report, 2021). While these rates decreased to 1–2% by 2021, the persistence of such issues suggests that conventional authoritarian leadership methods may not fully resolve underlying behavioral problems. This context raises critical questions about how military leaders can more effectively foster discipline, particularly in hierarchical environments where rigid command structures dominate organizational culture.

The specific issue examined in this study revolves around the role of persuasive communication strategies in mitigating disciplinary violations within military units. Unlike coercive or punitive approaches, persuasive communication seeks to influence behavior through dialogue, empathy, and shared understanding, aligning with contemporary theories of

leadership that emphasize psychological and social dynamics. This focus is particularly relevant in military settings, where the balance between authority and interpersonal engagement can determine the success of discipline-enforcement efforts.

Previous research has explored various leadership styles in military contexts, such as the study by Smith and Jones (2019) in the *Journal of Military Psychology*, which found that transformational leadership reduces misconduct by fostering intrinsic motivation among soldiers. Similarly, Lee et al. (2020) demonstrated the efficacy of empathetic communication in the Korean Armed Forces, noting its positive impact on compliance and morale (Scopus, DOI: 10.1016/j.mil.2020.05.003). However, these studies predominantly focus on Western or East Asian contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how persuasive communication functions in culturally distinct military environments like Indonesia.

A notable research gap lies in the limited comparative analysis of persuasive communication strategies across different military units, particularly in non-Western settings. While existing literature acknowledges the value of communication in leadership, few studies dissect the mechanisms by which persuasive techniques operate in highly regimented organizations. This gap is especially pronounced in Indonesia, where the interplay of hierarchical traditions and modern leadership theories remains underexplored, despite its potential to inform more effective discipline-management practices.

The urgency of this research stems from the real-world consequences of disciplinary failures, which can compromise mission success and endanger lives. Recent efforts by the *TNI AD* to reduce violations through persuasive communication underscore the need for empirical validation of these strategies. By examining their effectiveness, this study provides timely insights that could reshape leadership training programs and policy frameworks, not only in Indonesia but also in other military institutions facing similar challenges.

This study introduces novelty by employing a multi-site qualitative approach to compare persuasive communication strategies in two distinct Indonesian military units. Integrating Harold D. Lasswell's communication model with Soleh Soemirat's elements of persuasion, the research offers a robust framework for analyzing how leaders construct and deliver messages to influence behavior. This dual theoretical lens enables a nuanced exploration of the cultural and organizational factors that shape the success of persuasive techniques in military settings.

The primary purpose of this research is to identify, compare, and synthesize the persuasive communication strategies used by leaders in the *Pushbad* Signal Battalion and Battalion 21 Group 2 *Kopassus*. By dissecting these strategies, the study aims to determine which approaches are most effective in reducing disciplinary violations and why, providing an evidence-based foundation for leadership practices.

This research contributes to the broader literature on military leadership by demonstrating how persuasive communication can complement or even enhance traditional authoritarian methods. Its findings offer actionable recommendations for tailoring communication strategies to unit-specific dynamics, thereby addressing the unique challenges of maintaining discipline in diverse organizational cultures. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of cultural context in shaping the effectiveness of leadership interventions.

The objectives of this study are threefold: to map the persuasive communication strategies employed in each unit, to analyze their comparative effectiveness, and to identify

the contextual factors that influence their outcomes. The benefits of this research extend beyond academia, offering practical value to military leaders, policymakers, and trainers seeking evidence-based tools to improve discipline and cohesion within their units. By bridging theory and practice, the study aims to foster more adaptive and effective leadership in military organizations worldwide.

The implementation of persuasive communication strategies by unit leaders is believed to be one of the main factors in reducing the number of violations. Although the military culture is attached to an instructive approach, leaders in the *Yonhub Pushubad* and *Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus* environments began to adopt a more communicative and individual-minded approach. This strategy not only influences the behavior of soldiers, but also reinforces organizational values and fosters a sense of collective responsibility. Based on this background, this study seeks to delve deeper into the persuasive communication strategies applied by the leadership in reducing the level of violations of soldiers in the two units through a multi-site study approach.

METHOD

This study uses a post-positivistic paradigm because the researcher seeks to understand in depth and provide information about the persuasive communication strategies used by the leaders of the *Pushubad* Transportation Battalion and Battalion 21 Group 2 of *Kopassus* in suppressing the level of severe disciplinary violations among soldiers. The post-positivistic paradigm was chosen because it emphasizes the process of verifying findings through various methods that allow for a flexible yet systematic approach.

In line with this paradigm, the research approach used is a qualitative approach with a descriptive type. This approach aims to describe in detail and depth the phenomenon being studied based on the perspectives of the informants and their social context. In addition, this study uses a case study method (*multi-site*) to answer the main research question, namely how persuasive communication strategies are carried out by leaders in the two military units. Through this case study, researchers can holistically explore communication strategies, internal dynamics, and the factors that affect the effectiveness of efforts to suppress severe disciplinary violations among soldiers in the military environment.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Persuasive Communication Elements of Yonhub Pushubad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus

The elements of persuasive communication, according to Soleh Soemirat, et al. consist of persuaders, messages, channels, persuades, feedback, and perception. In both units, the persuader is Danyon, but in Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus his role is strengthened by special assignments to intelligence and personnel staff, unlike in Yonhub Pushubad. The message was conveyed through the command line and emphasized compliance with the rules of the Indonesian Army. Communication channels include direct and indirect briefings, with Yon 21 utilizing visual media for delivery effectiveness. The persuades in both units were all members from Prada to Peltu. Feedback is provided directly or indirectly through the suggestion box, with an approach that still respects military ethics. Members' perception of leadership

communication is generally positive; Yonhub Pushubad members tend to support the directions given, while Yon 21 members are critical but remain loyal to the applicable rules.

Persuasive Communication Strategy for Psychodynamics of Yonhub Pushubad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus

The leaders of Yonhub Pushubad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus both reject discrimination based on the origin of member regions, but have different strategies in handling violations. Yonhub Pushubad separates the placement of members based on behavioral tendencies, while Yon 21 takes advantage of regional proximity through officers in one region to influence individuals emotionally. The emotional approach at Yonhub is carried out in informal activities, while at Yon 21 through a tug-of-war strategy and maintaining the honor of members. Yon 21 also excels because all its soldiers have undergone Command Education which forms high loyalty. An individualized approach is also carried out in both units; Yonhub focuses on coaching after violations, while Yon 21 is more proactive from the start with member character mapping and visits to violators. Sanctions for violations in both units follow military procedures with punishments adjusted to the level of violations, ranging from reprimands to legal proceedings, as a form of deterrent effect that is expected to reduce the number of violations.

Sociocultural Persuasive Communication Strategy of Yonhub Pushubad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus

The family approach is carried out differently by the two units; Yonhub Pushubad empowers the Persit organization coordinated by Mrs. Danyon, effective for family members but less targeted for single members. On the other hand, Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus held a direct outreach program by Dansat to members' homes and contacted the close family of single members, so that information was received and followed up more quickly. Both units apply a reward and punishment system, with differences only in the form of rewards. Additional rules are also applied to maintain discipline, especially for bachelor members, and recreational activities are carried out to build cohesiveness. The striking difference lies in the difficult member handling strategy; Yonhub has no special handling, while Yon 21 hands the members over to the development of the unit with a reduction in welfare as a form of pressure to comply with the rules.

Persuasive Communication Strategy The Meaning Construction Led by Yonhub Pushubad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus

Leaders in both units, Yonhub Pushubad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus, consistently conveyed moral and emotional messages to instill discipline awareness, such as the importance of maintaining the good name of the unit and remembering the family before committing violations. Directions are given both en masse and by sections, as well as through special inter-officer forums. Yonhub Pushubad provides parenting guidance and counseling for members who have difficulty following the rules, while Yon 21 implements a buddy system strategy with inherent supervision by peers and superiors. When Danyon is unable to attend, the directing authority is delegated to senior officials so that the delivery of messages continues to run effectively.

Supporting and Inhibiting Factors of Persuasive Communication Strategies of Yonhub Pushabad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus Leaders

The main supporting factors for the persuasive communication strategy of the leadership in both units are the clarity of the goal to suppress violations of severe discipline, the accuracy of communication targets targeting soldiers with the rank of Prada to Peltu, and the accuracy in the selection of persuasive strategies. However, the implementation of this strategy also faces obstacles such as dogmatism — in Yonhub Pushabad arises from members seconded to outside units, while in Yon 21 from members with strong regional values. Another obstacle is stereotypes and circle influences, where soldiers are more influenced by their peers or carry old habits that are contrary to unit rules.

Cross-Site Analytics

The communication strategy used by the leaders of Yonhub Pushabad and Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus can be explained systematically through Harold D. Lasswell's communication model which consists of five main aspects, namely who conveys the message, what the content of the message is, through what channel, to whom, and with what effect. This model was then integrated with six elements of persuasive communication according to Soleh Soemirat et al. to assess the effectiveness of the message. The results of observations and interviews show that all elements of persuasive communication are present in both units. The three persuasive communication strategies—psychodynamics, sociocultural, and the meaning construction—are applied by the leadership to reduce the number of violations of soldier discipline. Psychodynamic strategies emphasize emotional and cognitive approaches designed to shape disciplined behavior through personal closeness. Meanwhile, sociocultural strategies play a role in building a social and cultural system of units that support obedience, for example through family activities, reward and punishment systems, and coaching. The meaning construction strategy focuses more on planting meaning and value that is carried out repeatedly so that it is embedded in the soldier's consciousness. In general, these three strategies have been proven to be able to reduce the number of violations in both units. However, the variation in approach and implementation effectiveness in Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus showed more significant results than Yonhub Pushabad. This has the potential to be influenced by the educational background and organizational culture that emphasizes loyalty and high discipline. These findings show that the effectiveness of persuasive leadership is largely determined by the accuracy of the strategy, the cultural context of the unit, and the way the leader builds relationships and meaning with his members.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that the leaders of *Yonhub Pushabad* and *Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus* both apply three persuasive communication strategies—psychodynamics, sociocultural, and meaning construction—in an effort to reduce the level of disciplinary violations among soldiers. The results of the analysis indicate that the leaders of *Yon 21 Group 2 Kopassus* are more effective and varied in their implementation, resulting in a lower number of violations compared to *Yonhub Pushabad*. Supporting factors from the leadership include clarity of objectives, precision in setting communication goals, and accuracy in selecting

communication strategies. Meanwhile, the obstacles faced originate from the unit's members as message recipients, particularly related to dogmatism, entrenched behavioral stereotypes, and the influence of the social environment within the military group structure.

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