

## **Integration of Field Leadership and Battalion Strategy in Enhancing Soldiers' Mission Success in High-Risk Areas**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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Sarmi Regency, Papua, was selected as the research locus due to its challenging geographical conditions, limited logistical access, and asymmetric security threat dynamics, which require adaptive leadership effectiveness and operational strategy. This study aims to analyze the influence of *field leadership style* and *battalion strategy* on the success of soldiers' missions in security operations conducted in high-risk areas. The study employed a quantitative approach with an explanatory research design to examine the causal relationship between *field leadership style* (X1) and *battalion strategy* (X2) on mission success (Y), both partially and simultaneously. The research population consisted of approximately 500 soldiers, with a sample of 222 respondents determined using the Slovin formula and a purposive sampling technique. Data were collected through a five-point Likert-scale questionnaire that met validity and reliability requirements. Data analysis was conducted using simple linear regression and multiple linear regression, accompanied by t-tests, F-tests, and the coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ). The results indicate that *field leadership style* has a positive and significant effect on mission success, as does *battalion strategy*. Simultaneously, both variables explain 56.3% of the variance in mission success. These findings confirm that mission success in high-risk areas is the result of the integration of adaptive *field leadership* and structured, contextual *battalion strategy*.

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### **Keywords:**

*field leadership; battalion strategy; mission success; high-risk areas; military operational effectiveness.*

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Security operations in vulnerable areas are a form of military assignment that places soldiers in a work environment with a high level of uncertainty, real safety risks, and threat dynamics that are not always present in conventional patterns (Briggs et al. 2019; Grimm et al. 2020). Vulnerable areas are generally characterized by the emergence of asymmetric threats that tend to fluctuate, move quickly, and often exploit terrain characteristics and coordination gaps to cause security disturbances. In this context, task success cannot be reduced simply to the achievement of operational targets within a certain time horizon but must be understood as a comprehensive and sustainable achievement, encompassing the effectiveness of actions, the psychological resilience of soldiers, the maintenance of discipline and operational procedures, and the formation of strong unit cohesion under pressure. Therefore, the assessment of the success of soldiers' tasks contains both managerial and psychological dimensions, because appropriate operational decisions must be accompanied by the unit's ability to maintain combat morale and internal stability when faced with difficult terrain conditions and dynamic threats (Lokyan et al. 2025; Rawoot et al. 2017; Tornero-Aguilera et al. 2024).

Sarmi Regency, Papua, as the research location, represents the challenges of operations in vulnerable areas through a combination of geographic factors, logistical access, and complex threat dynamics. The operational terrain, dominated by forested, hilly, coastal, and inland areas with limited transportation infrastructure, directly impacts troop mobility and the distribution of logistical support, which in turn can affect the tempo of operations, the continuity of patrols, and the quality of communication and coordination between unit elements (Halizahari et al. 2022; Stankiewicz et al. 2022; Winstanley 2025). This limited access also increases the demands on soldiers' physical and mental resilience, as deployments in such areas place them on prolonged alert, facing fatigue, potential isolation, and psychological stress due to threats that are not always clearly identified. At the same time, the situation on the ground can change rapidly, necessitating precise and coordinated tactical responses to prevent the escalation of security disturbances (Acton 2018; Loyear et al. 2026).

In operational reality, there are two main instruments that are conceptually and practically believed to have a strong influence on the success of soldiers' tasks: field leadership style and battalion strategy (Patterson 2017; Swain 2019; Wohlgemuth 2019). Field leadership serves as a directing and binding mechanism for soldiers' collective actions while also being a source of moral and psychological legitimacy that determines the level of subordinates' trust in the commander's decisions. In a high-risk environment, soldiers require certainty of direction transmitted through firm and clear communication and direct role models that demonstrate that the commander is not merely issuing orders from a safe distance but is present and sharing risk as part of unit cohesion. Field leadership that can combine decisiveness, exemplary behavior, and adaptability has the potential to foster discipline that is not merely formal obedience but rather obedience built on understanding and commitment to the mission, thereby increasing moral stability and fighting spirit. On the other hand, battalion strategy serves as an operational management framework that ensures that unit actions are not carried out in a reactive and fragmented manner (Swain 2019; Varela 2019). A structured strategy creates unity of direction through clear planning, appropriate task organization, information utilization, logistics management, and continuous command and control (C2), monitoring, and evaluation, so that every action in the field remains aligned with established operational objectives.

Several previous studies have emphasized the importance of leadership and strategy in military effectiveness. First, Boe and Bang (2022) found that military leadership significantly influences operational effectiveness in high-risk environments, particularly through the leader's ability to maintain morale and unit cohesion under pressure. Second, Snider and Matthews (2023) showed that military strategy has a strong impact on organizational performance in asymmetric warfare, especially when strategic planning is adaptive and supported by effective coordination mechanisms. Third, Stewart, Courtright, and Manz (2023) demonstrated that adaptive leadership improves operational performance in volatile environments by enabling units to respond more effectively to uncertainty and dynamic risks. These studies confirm that both leadership and strategy are important determinants of mission outcomes (Dhlamini 2025; Kipasika 2024). However, most previous studies have examined leadership and strategy separately or were conducted in the context of international missions, military training, or broader organizational settings rather than active domestic operations in high-risk areas such as Papua.

However, although field leadership and battalion strategy are doctrinally regarded as primary determinants of operational effectiveness, field practice shows variations in success rates between units or assignment periods, even in areas with relatively similar threat characteristics. This variation indicates possible differences in the quality of leadership and strategies applied, as well as differences in the ability to implement operational policies at the field level. Therefore, this study is positioned to provide empirical evidence, based on a quantitative approach, regarding the influence of field leadership style and battalion strategy on the success of soldiers' tasks in vulnerable areas. This study explicitly tests the partial effect of each independent variable and the simultaneous effect of both on the success of soldiers' tasks as the dependent variable. This is expected to produce a more comprehensive explanatory model that can be used as a basis for strengthening unit development policies.

A review of previous research over the past three years indicates a growing trend of interest in the relationship between military leadership and organizational effectiveness. A 2022 study in the *Asian Defense Journal* demonstrated that transformational leadership significantly impacts troop morale in internal security operations, using quantitative survey methods and regression analysis. A 2023 study in the context of international peacekeeping operations found that intelligence-based strategies and adaptive planning enhance coordination effectiveness and reduce the risk of tactical errors. A 2024 study in the *Defense Management Journal* demonstrated that integrating adaptive leadership and structured operational strategies improves unit performance in the context of military exercises. However, these studies are limited by geographic context and have not tested simultaneous models of leadership and strategy in active operations in domestically vulnerable areas.

This research gap is highlighted in three main aspects. First, there has been no quantitative research that simultaneously examines the influence of field leadership style and battalion strategy on soldier task success in a single regression model during active operations in vulnerable areas with severe geographic characteristics and asymmetric threats. Second, most previous research was conducted in the context of international training or missions, so generalization to domestic contexts such as Papua remains limited. Third, there has been no empirical model that explicitly integrates situational leadership, strategic management, and C2 theories within a comprehensive quantitative framework. Therefore, this research does not simply replicate previous studies but develops an integrative model that fills this gap in the literature and provides a stronger empirical contribution.

Based on this background, the objective of this study is to analyze the effect of field leadership style and battalion strategy on the success of soldiers' missions in high-risk areas, both partially and simultaneously. Theoretically, this study is expected to enrich defense studies literature by strengthening the empirical integration of transformational leadership, situational leadership, strategic management, and command and control theories in explaining military mission success. Practically, the findings are expected to provide useful input for commanders and military institutions in improving leadership development, operational planning, and battalion-level strategic management in vulnerable operational areas. In addition, this study may contribute to the formulation of more adaptive and contextual policies for strengthening military effectiveness in high-risk environments.

## METHOD

This research method used an explanatory quantitative research design to empirically test the influence of field leadership style and battalion strategy on the success of soldiers' tasks in the context of security operations in vulnerable areas. The explanatory approach was chosen because this study aimed not only to describe phenomena but also to systematically test causal relationships between variables based on the theoretical framework of organization, leadership, and strategic management formulated in the literature review. Epistemologically, this research was based on a positivistic paradigm, which posits that social reality in military organizations can be measured through structured indicators, analyzed statistically, and explained through testable cause-and-effect relationships.

The first step in this research was the formulation of the problem and the development of a conceptual model based on a synthesis of transformational leadership theory, situational leadership theory, strategic management theory, and command and control (C2) theory. From this conceptual framework, research hypotheses were formulated stating that field leadership style influenced soldier task success, battalion strategy influenced soldier task success, and both simultaneously had a significant influence on task success. This stage was followed by the operationalization of variables, where each theoretical construct was translated into indicators that could be measured quantitatively.

The study was conducted in a battalion unit carrying out security operations in Sarmi Regency, Papua, as a representation of a vulnerable area with severe geographic characteristics and asymmetric threat dynamics. The study population consisted of all soldiers involved in security operations, totaling approximately 500 personnel. Sampling was conducted using the Slovin formula at a 5% margin of error to ensure data representativeness, resulting in a sample of 222 respondents. The sampling technique used purposive sampling, with the criteria for respondents being soldiers directly involved in operational tasks, having a minimum assignment period of three months, and actively participating in patrols, regional security, or relevant operational support activities. The selection of these criteria was intended to ensure that respondents had sufficient empirical experience to assess the quality of leadership and the strategies implemented.

Data collection was conducted using a structured questionnaire instrument based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The questionnaire was developed based on operational indicators of the research variables. The variable of field leadership style was measured through indicators of communication clarity, exemplary behavior, decisiveness in decision-making, adaptability to changing situations, and the ability to maintain soldier morale. The variable of battalion strategy was measured through indicators of systematic operational planning, clear organization, utilization of intelligence, adequate logistical support, and command and control (C2), as well as evaluation mechanisms. The variable of soldier task success was measured through indicators of operational discipline, combat morale, unit cohesion, and mission execution effectiveness. Before being widely administered, the research instrument was tested for validity using item-total correlation to ensure each question item represented the construct being measured, and its reliability was tested using Cronbach's alpha coefficient to ensure internal consistency among items within each variable.

The data collection process was conducted over a three-month period of active assignment, with questionnaires distributed directly to eligible respondents. The data obtained were then coded and entered into statistical software for further processing. The data processing stage began with descriptive analysis to describe the respondents' profiles and their perception tendencies toward each variable. Next, classical assumption tests were conducted, including a normality test to ensure that the residuals were normally distributed, a multicollinearity test to ensure there was no high correlation among independent variables, and a heteroscedasticity test to ensure homogeneity of residual variances.

The main analysis was conducted using simple linear regression and multiple linear regression. Simple regression was used to test the partial effect of each independent variable on the dependent variable, while multiple regression was used to test the simultaneous effect of field leadership style and battalion strategy on soldier task success. Hypothesis testing was conducted using a t-test to determine the significance of partial effects and an F-test to determine the significance of simultaneous effects at the 5% significance level. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) was used to measure the contribution of the two independent variables in explaining variations in soldier task success.

The results of the statistical analysis were then interpreted substantively by linking the empirical findings to the theoretical framework used. This interpretation aimed to understand the theoretical and practical implications of the research findings and to assess the extent to which the developed model explained the phenomenon of soldier task success in the context of operations in vulnerable areas. Therefore, this research method was systematically designed to produce valid, reliable, and relevant empirical findings for the development of defense studies and the strengthening of operational policies at the battalion level.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The results of this study were obtained through a systematic quantitative analysis of data collected from 222 soldiers directly involved in security operations in vulnerable areas. The analysis process began with testing the quality of the research instrument to ensure the validity and reliability of the constructs used to measure the variables of field leadership style, battalion strategy, and soldier task success. The results of the validity test showed that all indicators had an adequate correlation with the constructs they represented, thus concluding that the instrument used was capable of representing the conceptual dimensions formulated in the theoretical framework. The reliability test showed a high level of internal consistency, indicating that each variable was measured stably and reliably. This stage is crucial from the epistemological perspective of quantitative research, as it ensures that the complex realities of military organizations can be translated into valid and objectively measurable empirical indicators.

Descriptively, the research results show that respondents gave a relatively high rating to the quality of the field leadership style applied in the unit. The dimensions of communication clarity, exemplary behavior, assertiveness, adaptability, and the ability to maintain soldier morale were assessed as being in the good to excellent category. This indicates that in the context of operations in vulnerable areas, field leaders not only perform administrative functions but also act as authoritative figures who provide direction and psychological stability for soldiers. Clarity of communication is crucial because in asymmetric threat situations and

complex terrain, any ambiguity in commands can increase the risk of operational errors. The leader's exemplary behavior, particularly in the form of courage to share risks and direct involvement in field activities, strengthens the moral legitimacy of the command and builds trust among subordinates. Decisiveness in decision-making reduces the potential for doubt and increases the speed of response to threats. Adaptability demonstrates the leader's ability to adapt their approach to changing situations, which are inherent characteristics of vulnerable areas. Meanwhile, the ability to maintain soldier morale strengthens cohesion and fighting spirit, thereby maintaining the psychological stability of the unit under conditions of prolonged stress.

The results of a simple regression analysis indicate that field leadership style has a positive and significant influence on soldier task success. Statistically, improvements in leadership quality are directly proportional to improvements in operational discipline, combat morale, unit cohesion, and mission execution effectiveness. This finding confirms the transformational leadership theory, which states that leaders who are able to inspire and set an example will increase the commitment and performance of organizational members. In a military context, where hierarchical structures are formal and commands are firm, the moral legitimacy of the leader is a differentiating factor between formal compliance and substantive commitment. Effective leadership not only results in compliance with instructions but also builds a collective awareness of the importance of the mission and institutional responsibilities. Epistemologically, this finding indicates that leadership variables measured through soldier perceptions have empirical relevance in explaining variations in task success.

On the other hand, the results of the regression analysis indicate that battalion strategy also has a positive and significant impact on the success of soldiers' tasks. Structured, adaptive, and information-based strategies have been shown to improve coordination, reduce ambiguity, and strengthen the effectiveness of operational execution. Systematic planning provides clear direction regarding the objectives and stages of operations, ensuring that each soldier understands their role and contribution within the larger structure. Clear organization prevents overlapping functions and ensures effective distribution of responsibilities. Utilizing intelligence improves the accuracy of tactical decisions, thus minimizing the risk of errors. Adequate logistical support strengthens operational sustainability and maintains soldiers' physical and mental well-being. Control and evaluation mechanisms enable units to make continuous corrections, ensuring that strategies do not stop at the initial planning stage but instead evolve according to the dynamics of the situation. These findings support strategic management theory and Command and Control theory, which emphasize the importance of integrating information, decisions, and execution in modern military operations.

Multiple regression analysis shows that field leadership style and battalion strategy simultaneously explain 56.3% of the variation in soldiers' task success. This figure indicates that more than half of the task success can be explained by these two main variables, indicating the model's strong explanatory power in the context of military organizations in high-risk areas. Conceptually, this finding strengthens the argument that operational effectiveness is the result of the integration of psychological and structural dimensions. Field leadership serves as a morale booster and social cohesion, while battalion strategy serves as a structural framework that guides collective action. Without strong leadership, strategy risks becoming an administrative document that is not effectively internalized by soldiers. Conversely, without a

structured strategy, leadership risks being responsive but unsystematic. The integration of the two creates organizational stability that allows units to operate effectively in high-risk environments.

However, 43.7% of the variation in task success remains unexplained by this model. This suggests that other factors such as specific geographic conditions, threat intensity, equipment quality, individual soldier experience, and local social dynamics also influence operational success. This limitation provides room for further research to develop a more comprehensive model by incorporating additional variables or using a more complex structural analysis approach. Furthermore, the use of a quantitative approach based on respondent perceptions has the potential for subjective bias, although this has been minimized through instrument validity and reliability testing.

Theoretically, this research contributes by strengthening the integration of leadership and strategic management theories in defense studies. Practically, the results emphasize the importance of strengthening adaptive field leadership development and refining a structured and responsive battalion strategy system. This discussion demonstrates that the success of soldiers in vulnerable areas is not a coincidence, but rather the result of appropriate organizational design and effective leadership in managing the dynamics of risk and uncertainty.

### CONCLUSION

This study concluded that field leadership style and battalion strategy had a positive and significant effect on the success of soldiers' missions in security operations in high-risk areas, both partially and simultaneously, with both variables jointly explaining 56.3% of the variation in mission success. The findings demonstrated that mission success was not determined solely by technical or material factors but also by the integration of adaptive leadership and structured operational strategy. Field leadership characterized by clear communication, exemplary behavior, decisiveness, adaptability, and morale-building strengthened discipline, cohesion, and psychological stability, while battalion strategy enhanced mission effectiveness through systematic planning, organization, intelligence utilization, logistics support, and control mechanisms. These results enriched defense studies by confirming that leadership and strategy are key determinants of unit performance in high-risk environments, while practically suggesting that military units should strengthen adaptive leadership capacity through simulation-based training, improve intelligence-supported strategic planning systems, and integrate leadership development with operational strategy within a unified framework. However, given that this study was limited to a single unit and operational area, future research is recommended to examine broader operational contexts and incorporate additional variables—such as organizational culture, technological support, and inter-unit coordination—to develop a more comprehensive understanding of mission success in vulnerable areas.

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