

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

## COMMANDING UNITY: EXPLORING THE NEXUS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES, TEAM COMMUNICATION, AND SOLDIERS' CONFIDENCE IN COMMAND IN SHAPING ARMY UNIT COHESION

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### —Abstract—

Within the dynamic and constantly changing realm of military operations, the fundamental importance of the unity and efficiency of army units cannot be overstated, as they serve as crucial determinants in the attainment of mission objectives. This study investigates the connections between leadership styles (autocratic, democratic, and transformational), team communication, and soldiers' confidence in command as crucial factors influencing unit cohesion, which in turn impacts the operational effectiveness of the military. The theoretical framework guiding this research is the social identity theory. Utilising a heterogeneous sample of 410 individuals affiliated with the military, the present study employs SmartPLS 3 software to examine the interrelationships among the aforementioned pivotal variables. The results of the study demonstrate noteworthy correlations between leadership styles and team communication, affirming that autocratic leadership hinders transparent communication, whereas democratic and transformational leadership styles promote inclusive and open dialogue. Communication within a team has a positive impact on the unity and cohesion of the group, highlighting its crucial significance in enhancing the overall effectiveness of military operations. Moreover, the confidence of soldiers in their commanding officers emerges as a crucial factor that influences the way leadership and communication dynamics affect the cohesion of military units. The findings presented in this study provide significant contributions to military organisations aiming to optimise their leadership strategies, improve communication effectiveness, and strengthen unit cohesion. The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of implementing strategies aimed at developing leadership skills, enhancing communication abilities, and fostering trust within military units.

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**Keywords:** Leadership Styles; Team Communication; Solders' Confidence in Command; Army Unit Cohesion

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Autocratic leadership, in particular, has been found to exhibit effectiveness in contexts that demand prompt and resolute decision-making. However, it is important to note that prolonged implementation of autocratic leadership can potentially undermine trust and collaboration among team members (Brooks & White, 2022). On the other hand, the adoption of a democratic leadership style has the potential to foster inclusivity and stimulate innovation. However, it is important to note that this approach may impede the process of decision-making in situations where prompt action is imperative (Alley, 2023).

Conversely, the implementation of transformational leadership has the potential to inspire and motivate individuals within a group to accomplish remarkable accomplishments, although its long-term efficacy may depend on the presence of a charismatic leader (Begum, Ashfaq, Xia, & Awan, 2022). The various contextual factors that are inherent in military operations further exacerbate the complex nature of leadership. Military personnel frequently encounter high-pressure circumstances in which the ability to make prompt and precise decisions is crucial for their survival (Brown, Marinan, & Partridge, 2020). The potential influence of leadership styles on the level of unit cohesion may differ in extreme circumstances as opposed to more conventional organisational environments. In order to obtain a comprehensive comprehension of the intricate interplay at hand, this research paper utilises a multifaceted methodology. This study investigates the impact of various leadership styles on the development of unit cohesion while also exploring the mediating role of team communication.

Effective communication plays a crucial role in military operations, serving as the pivotal factor that determines the success or failure of missions (Das, Saha, & Roy, 2021). The effectiveness of military units relies on the fluid transmission of information, the precision of directives, and the cultivation of trust among personnel (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). Therefore, effective team communication plays a pivotal role in comprehending the correlation between different leadership styles and the level of unity within a group. In military settings characterised by dynamic and rapidly changing circumstances, as well as pervasive ambiguity, the significance of effective communication cannot be overemphasised. It is imperative for military personnel to possess a comprehensive understanding of their assigned duties, specific goals, and the overarching mission at hand. The communication patterns within a unit can be significantly influenced by different leadership styles (Lee, Park, & Jeong, 2023). Autocratic leaders have the propensity to establish a hierarchical structure that may impede the free flow of dialogue, whereas democratic leaders tend to foster a climate that promotes inclusive and participatory discussions (Kendall-Taylor & Frantz, 2022).

Moreover, the study highlights the potential of team communication to mediate the impact of various leadership styles on unit cohesion. The establishment of trust and the facilitation of coordination can be enhanced through effective communication, even when confronted with a range of leadership approaches (Wasserman et al., 2023). This study endeavours to offer empirical evidence and insights that can inform military leadership practices, improve training modules, and contribute to the development of effective policies (Brooks & White, 2022). This study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between leadership styles, team communication, and unit cohesion. By examining these factors, the research intends to offer valuable insights that can be applied by military organisations to enhance their operational effectiveness and successfully accomplish their strategic goals.

Conceding that, this research examines the moderating influence of soldiers' confidence in command, recognising the significant impact of trust in leadership on the development of unit cohesion. The level of trust that soldiers place in their leaders can either amplify or mitigate the impact of various leadership styles on group cohesion (Legionosuko, Widodo, & Halkis, 2022). The establishment of trust in leadership plays a crucial role in connecting the leadership approach to the overall cohesion and efficacy of the military unit (Handayani & Widana, 2022). The exploration and analysis of the moderating influence of soldiers' confidence in command in relation to various leadership styles and its consequential effect on unit cohesion represent a significant and unexplored aspect that is crucial for improving the overall effectiveness of military operations.

Furthermore, the present investigation was carried out within the framework of the Indonesian Army (Widodo, Hadna, & Listyaningsih, 2023). The location is situated within a larger context of military operations and training. According to recent evaluations, it has been observed that the Indonesian Army has demonstrated notable accomplishments in diverse missions. However, it is important to acknowledge that there are ongoing challenges pertaining to the maintenance of unit cohesion (Suseno, Listyaningsih, & Maryudi, 2022). Given the aforementioned context, the primary objective of this study is to provide a thorough examination of the complex dynamics that exist among leadership styles, team communication, soldiers' confidence in command, and unit cohesion. This study aims to offer valuable insights that can assist military leadership in promoting enhanced unity and effectiveness within the Indonesian Army, particularly in response to evolving operational demands. Thereby bridging the existing knowledge gap, the current study aims to;

- Empirically investigate the effects of various leadership styles, namely autocratic, democratic, and transformational leadership, on team communication and unit cohesion within the Indonesian Army. This exploration seeks to offer valuable insights into the optimal leadership strategies for promoting effective communication and fostering cohesion within this particular context.

- provide a comprehensive understanding of the mediating role of team communication in the association between leadership styles and unit cohesion within the Indonesian Army. By comprehending the impact of leadership practises on team interactions, valuable insights can be obtained regarding the underlying mechanisms that drive cohesion dynamics.
- Assess the moderating impact of soldiers' confidence in command on the association between team communication and unit cohesion. The present analysis aims to offer a comprehensive examination of the relationship between trust in leadership and its impact on team communication and cohesion within military units.
- Provide evidence-based recommendations that are specifically tailored to the operational context of the Indonesian Army. The following recommendations are based on empirical research and aim to provide guidance for military leadership practices, training programmes, and policies. Their purpose is to improve unit cohesion and, as a result, enhance the overall effectiveness of the Indonesian Army in fulfilling its missions.

## 2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

According to Social Identity Theory, individuals engage in the process of categorising themselves and others into different social groups, which is determined by common characteristics, values, and affiliations (Tajfel & Turner, 2004). Social groups play a pivotal role in influencing an individual's self-concept and behaviour. Within the realm of military units, this theoretical framework provides a solid basis for comprehending the impact of leadership styles on soldiers' perceptions of their unit-based identity, thereby influencing cohesion (Bekesiene & Smaliukiene, 2022). Based on the tenets of Social Identity Theory, individuals have a tendency to develop a stronger sense of identification with groups that they perceive as their "in-group." Within a military framework, the unit assumes the role of the in-group (Liu, Yin, & Zhang, 2022).

The perception of a military unit can be influenced by different leadership styles. Transformational leaders frequently cultivate a robust sense of identity and a shared purpose among their units, thereby augmenting in-group identification (Dawy, Yohana, & Widodo, 2022). The theory additionally highlights the concept of inter-group differentiation, wherein individuals establish distinctions between their own in-group and other out-groups. The impact of leadership styles on soldiers' perceptions and subsequent attitudes and behaviours towards other units is a significant area of study. The establishment of effective team communication and leadership can contribute to the development of a sense of superiority and cohesion within a team, particularly in the face of external challenges (Du & Yan, 2022). Within this theoretical framework, leadership styles can be conceptualised as a social category. Soldiers classify their leaders according to their leadership style, which encompasses various approaches such as autocratic, democratic, and transformational.

Social Identity Theory recognises that various factors, including communication, serve as mediators in the dynamics of group processes. Team communication that is effective has the potential to strengthen social identity, resulting in the improvement of unit cohesion (Dizaji, 2022). Additionally, the level of soldiers' trust in their commanding officers can serve as a moderating factor, exerting influence on the manner in which team communication affects soldiers' sense of belonging to the military unit, as determined by their perception of the unit's efficacy. By utilising Social Identity Theory as a theoretical framework for the study, a more comprehensive understanding can be achieved regarding the intricate dynamics between leadership, communication, soldiers' trust, and unit cohesion within military units.

## 2.1 Leadership Styles and Unit Cohesion

The leadership style known as autocratic leadership, which stands out for its hierarchical and authoritative approach, can have both positive and negative effects on a group's cohesiveness (Khorram-Manesh & Burkle, 2023). Autocratic leadership has been found to facilitate expeditious decision-making, establish unambiguous hierarchies, and create a structured milieu (Rosing, Boer, & Buengeler, 2022). These attributes can foster a perception of organisation and discipline within the group. Nevertheless, empirical evidence also indicates that excessive utilisation of this practice can undermine trust and collaboration within a team. It has been suggested that soldiers may experience feelings of disempowerment and undervaluation, which could potentially result in diminished cohesion within their ranks due to their limited participation in decision-making procedures (Au-Yong-Oliveira & Walter, 2022).

The democratic leadership style, characterised by its emphasis on participation, open communication, and shared decision-making, has generally demonstrated a positive association with team productivity and organisational growth (Carnegie, Kertzer, & Yarhi-Milo, 2023). Soldiers serving under democratic leadership frequently experience a sense of being acknowledged, esteemed, and empowered. Individuals exhibit a sense of ownership pertaining to their respective roles and unit objectives, thereby cultivating robust interpersonal connections and a collective dedication towards the mission (Bakker, Breevaart, Scharp, & de Vries, 2023). The implementation of a participatory approach has been observed to foster increased cohesion within teams through the establishment of trust among both team members and leaders.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the implementation of transformational leadership, which encompasses the qualities of inspiring, motivating, and establishing lofty expectations, exerts a significant and beneficial influence on the cohesiveness of a unit (Rehardiningtyas & Almubaroq, 2022). Transformational leaders frequently exhibit leadership through personal demonstration and cultivate a shared sense of purpose and dedication towards a collective vision. These activities serve to foster innovation,

facilitate individual development within the military personnel, and cultivate a shared sense of camaraderie and cohesion (Sulaiman, Hadna, Darwin, & Kutaneegara, 2023). Soldiers who are motivated by transformational leaders exhibit a strong sense of cohesion and demonstrate a profound dedication towards the attainment of shared objectives and values (Siagian, Setyadi, Hendri, & Fitrio, 2022). Based on literature and theoretical support, we posit that;

**H1 a, b, and c:** *There is a significant relationship between different leadership styles (autocratic, democratic, and transformational) and military unit cohesion.*

## 2.2 Leadership Styles and Team Communication

The influence of autocratic leadership on team communication within a military unit is expected to be substantial. In this particular style, communication is characterised by a hierarchical structure in which leaders predominantly transmit orders and instructions to their subordinates (Warsono & Riduwan, 2019). While employing this methodology can indeed guarantee lucidity in instructions and an organised hierarchy of authority, it has the potential to impede the free flow of ideas and hinder the development of constructive discourse. It is plausible that soldiers may exhibit reluctance in offering feedback or expressing their ideas, thereby potentially impeding the dissemination of information (Saurav & Kishor, 2022).

Consequently, team communication within the context of autocratic leadership tends to exhibit a more hierarchical and directive nature, thereby restricting the potential for collaborative exchange. In contrast, democratic leadership exhibits a notable positive influence on team communication. This particular approach fosters an environment that promotes active discussion, engagement, and the exchange of thoughts and perspectives among members of a team (Kuri & Kaufman, 2020). Under a democratic leadership style, soldiers are more inclined to articulate their viewpoints, propose suggestions, and actively participate in discussions (Dizaji, 2022). This methodology facilitates the dissemination of information, cultivates an atmosphere of confidence, and encourages the interchange of varied viewpoints. The presence of effective team communication contributes to the development of well-informed decision-making processes and the establishment of a more cohesive unit (Khan, Dyaram, & Dayaram, 2022).

Likewise, transformational leadership has been found to have a positive impact on team communication. Transformational leaders possess the ability to inspire and motivate individuals within the military, fostering a collective understanding of objectives and a dedication to a unified vision. The aforementioned motivation frequently results in heightened levels of enthusiasm and a propensity for open communication (Rehardiningtyas & Almubaroq, 2022). There is a greater propensity for soldiers to engage in collaboration, exchange innovative ideas, and provide mutual support when

under the guidance of transformational leaders (Sulaiman, Hadna, Darwin, & Kutaneegara, 2023). As a result, communication within the team is enhanced, placing importance on the establishment of common objectives and values, thereby fostering increased unity within the group. Hence, it is posited that;

**H24a, b, and c:** *There is a significant relationship between different leadership styles (Autocratic, Democratic, and Transformational) and the quality of Team Communication within military units.*

### 2.3 Team Communication and Unit Cohesion

Effective team communication is a crucial factor that significantly impacts the level of unit cohesion observed in military environments. The cohesiveness of military units can be significantly improved through the implementation of effective team communication strategies (Fors Brandebo, Börjesson, & Hilmarrsson, 2022). For example, the establishment of open and transparent communication within a team contributes to the cultivation of trust among its members (Patel, Khanpara, Valiveti, & Raval, 2023). Soldiers who perceive that their ideas, concerns, and contributions are acknowledged and esteemed are more inclined to place trust in their fellow soldiers and superiors. Trust serves as the fundamental basis for cohesion, as soldiers depend on one another in critical circumstances. Effective team communication plays a crucial role in ensuring that all members of a unit possess a shared understanding of mission objectives, strategies, and tactics (Valor-Segura et al., 2020).

The establishment of well-defined roles and responsibilities fosters effective communication by minimising ambiguity and the likelihood of misunderstandings, thereby safeguarding group cohesion (Feng et al., 2020). Soldiers are more inclined to exhibit cohesive behaviour when they possess a comprehensive understanding of their respective roles and their integration within the broader mission. Furthermore, the implementation of efficient team communication facilitates prompt adjustment to the dynamic conditions encountered in the field. Organisations possessing the capability to rapidly disseminate intelligence regarding adversary activities, alterations in the environment, or emerging hazards are more aptly prepared to coordinate their actions effectively and arrive at well-informed judgements promptly (Carnegie, Kertzer, & Yarhi-Milo, 2023). Hence, it can be stated that;

**H3:** *There is a significant relationship between the quality of Team Communication and Unit Cohesion within military units.*

### 2.4 Mediatory Role of Team

The role of team communication is of utmost importance in comprehending the impact of diverse leadership styles on the cohesiveness of military units. The conduit referred

to in the statement serves as a means by which leadership behaviours are conveyed and subsequently transformed into the cohesiveness of the unit (Patel, Khanpara, Valiveti, & Raval, 2023). The mediation process exhibits divergent patterns depending on the leadership styles employed. Autocratic leadership is frequently associated with communication patterns that involve the issuance of instructions from higher authorities and a restricted scope for receiving feedback (Zaman et al., 2021). While team members may be provided with explicit instructions, opportunities for open discussions and idea sharing may be limited. Within this particular framework, the role of team communication is to moderate the influence of autocratic leadership by minimising the dissemination of commands and instructions, as well as eliminating the obstacles that exist between leaders and subordinates.

Furthermore, it has been observed that the calibre and efficacy of communication have the potential to impact the level of comprehension and execution of tasks among soldiers, thereby exerting an influence on their collective sense of unity and cohesion (Lee, Park, & Jeong, 2023). The presence of limited communication has the potential to result in misunderstandings and reduced cohesion. Conversely, effective communication has the ability to foster clarity and enhance cohesion, albeit within a hierarchical framework. Democratic leadership style promotes the engagement of individuals through participatory communication and the facilitation of open dialogue (Rosing, Boer, & Buengeler, 2022). In this particular scenario, the facilitation of team communication serves as a mediator for the influence of democratic leadership, as it effectively promotes the exchange of ideas, feedback, and information. Soldiers experience a heightened sense of empowerment, which facilitates the expression of their perspectives, ultimately resulting in a more well-informed decision-making process and fostering a collective sense of ownership towards the unit's objectives. The establishment of effective communication within a team enhances the interconnectedness among its members, thereby cultivating an environment characterised by trust and collaboration, which in turn plays a pivotal role in promoting unity within the group.

In addition, the application of transformational leadership within military contexts serves to instil inspiration and motivation among soldiers, fostering a sense of shared vision and a collective dedication to achieving common objectives (Nissinen, Dormantaitè, & Dungveckis, 2022). The role of a mediator is to enhance the impact of transformational leadership by promoting the active and enthusiastic exchange of ideas, innovations, and feedback within a team. Soldiers who are subjected to transformational leadership exhibit a higher propensity for engaging in proactive communication, sharing their insights, and effectively collaborating with others (Rehardiningtyas & Almubaroq, 2022). The increased level of communication among individuals in a group serves to strengthen their shared sense of identity and dedication, ultimately resulting in a greater level of unity and cohesion within the group. Thus, based on theory, literature review, and logical arguments, it is posited that;

**H4a, b, and c:** *Team Communication mediates the relationship between different leadership styles (Autocratic, Democratic, and Transformational) and Unit Cohesion within military units.*

## **2.5 Moderating Roles of Soldiers' Confidence in Command**

The present study additionally posits that the level of soldiers' trust in their commanding officers can serve as a moderator, enhancing the beneficial impacts of team communication on the overall cohesiveness of the unit. The presence of strong confidence among soldiers towards their leaders enhances the significance of effective communication within the team (Siagian, Setyadi, Hendri, & Fitrio, 2022). In instances of this nature, military personnel are prone to participating in transparent communication and exhibiting heightened confidence in the information and directives shared. The increased level of confidence in leadership serves to strengthen the interpersonal connections among team members, thereby fostering a more robust perception of solidarity and coherence within the group. The influence of soldiers' confidence in command on the relationship between team communication and unit cohesion can be observed, as it serves to alleviate the adverse consequences of inadequate communication within the team (Bekesiene & Smaliukiene, 2022).

In instances characterised by communication breakdowns or misunderstandings, soldiers who possess a strong sense of confidence in their leaders may exhibit greater resilience. Individuals may perceive such occurrences as atypical occurrences rather than typical ones, ascribing them to misunderstandings rather than a deficiency in trust (Siswanto, Basalamah, Mus, & Semmaila, 2020). A level of confidence can serve as a protective barrier, mitigating the potential decline in cohesion that could arise from difficulties in communication. Additionally, Martínez-Córcoles, Stephanou, and Schöbel (2020) found that a soldier's level of confidence in their commanding officers can affect how they perceive and respond to communication within their team. Soldiers are more likely to interpret communication in a positive manner, particularly in situations that are ambiguous or challenging, when they possess a strong sense of confidence in their leaders.

The aforementioned interpretation subsequently influences individuals' perceptions of the cohesiveness of the unit. Concurrently, soldiers who possess a high level of trust in their leaders may exhibit a greater propensity to view any instances of communication difficulties as transitory or insignificant, thereby upholding their dedication to the collective and safeguarding the unity of the unit (Siswanto, Basalamah, Mus, & Semmaila, 2020). Hence, it can be stated that;

**H5:** *Soldiers' confidence in command serves as a multifaceted moderator in the relationship between team communication and unit cohesion. It can amplify the positive effects of effective communication on cohesion within military units.*

## 2.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Figure 1 illustrates the theoretical framework guiding this study based on theory and literature support.

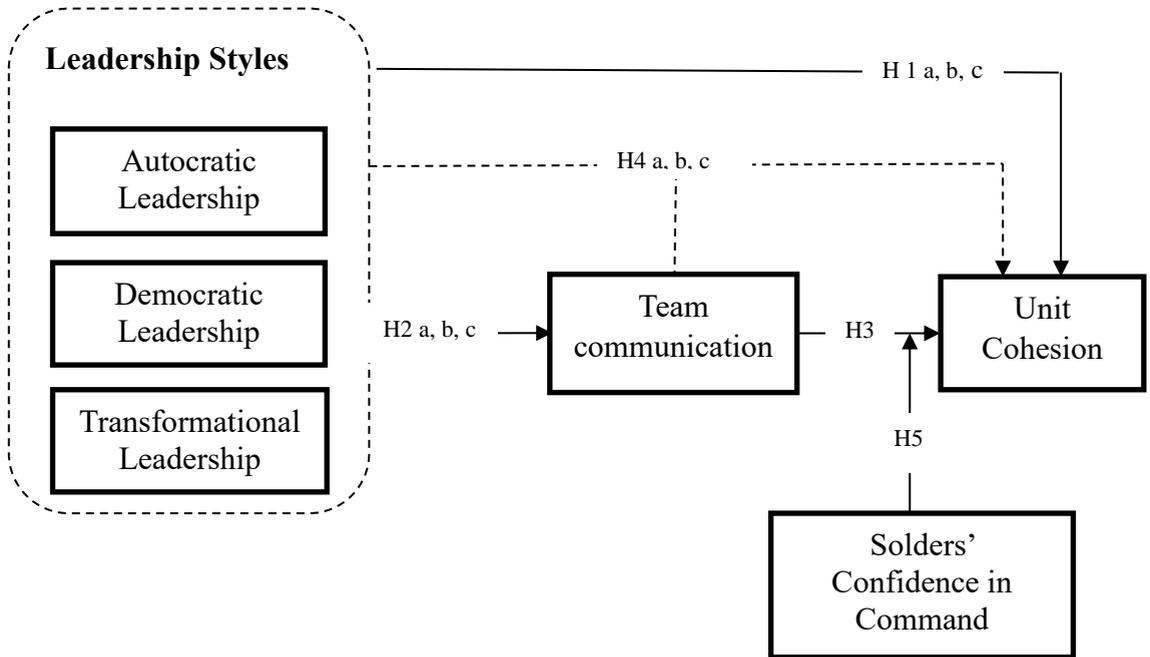


Figure 1: Theoretical Farmwork of the Study

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Research Design

The present study utilised a quantitative research methodology to examine the intricate associations between various leadership styles, team communication, soldiers' confidence in command, and unit cohesion within military units. The study employed a cross-sectional methodology, which facilitated the gathering of data at a specific moment in time to capture a static representation of the examined relationships.

### 3.2 Participants

The research encompassed individuals serving in different divisions of the Indonesian Army, specifically military personnel. A cohort of 650 individuals was initially approached for potential participation in the research study. The study successfully recruited a total of 523 participants through a meticulously organised recruitment process, which included proactive engagement with various units and military personnel. These individuals willingly consented to participate in the study. Following

the completion of data cleaning procedures and rigorous quality checks, the ultimate dataset encompassed a total of 410 participants' responses. Therefore, it resulted in a response rate of 63.07%.

### 3.3 Participant Recruitment Process

The recruitment process was initiated on October 15, 2022, employing a methodical approach to identify and engage potential participants. Permission and cooperation for data collection were sought from military units and relevant authorities. Following the acquisition of the requisite authorizations, formal invitations were disseminated to military personnel via official channels, inviting their participation in the study.

### 3.4 Data Collection

The collection of data was conducted by means of structured surveys and questionnaires that were administered to the participants. The instruments utilised in this study were meticulously crafted and rigorously validated in order to evaluate essential variables. The participants were instructed to evaluate their perceptions and experiences using established scales and Likert-type items.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

The present study was conducted in accordance with rigorous ethical protocols. All participants were required to provide informed consent, thereby ensuring their voluntary participation and guaranteeing the confidentiality of their information. Furthermore, the study obtained approval from the appropriate institutional ethics review board.

### 3.6 Timeline

The research project was initiated on October 15, 2022, and spanned a duration of nine months, encompassing activities such as data collection, data cleaning, and analysis. The data collection process reached its final phase on July 30th, 2023.

### 3.7 Study Measures

The study variables and their corresponding items are presented in Table 1. A set of 10 questions from the study by [Bolarinwa, Ajayi, Adenuga, and Obayelu \(2023\)](#) served as the basis for the assessment of autocratic leadership. The assessment of democratic leadership was conducted using a set of four items that were adapted from the work of [Hoque and Raya \(2023\)](#). Simultaneously, in order to assess the construct of transformational leadership, three items were employed from the scale developed by [Hoque and Raya \(2023\)](#). The assessment of team communication quality was conducted using a 7-item scale that was modified from the work of [Junod Perron et al. \(2013\)](#).

This investigation also assessed the frequency, transparency, and efficacy of communication within military units. The assessment of participants' confidence in their commanding officers was conducted by [Pastor-Álvarez, Molero-Alonso, and Moriano-León \(2019\)](#) using a tailored questionnaire comprising 8 items. The survey assessed the levels of trust, faith, and satisfaction that individuals had towards the leadership. The evaluation of unit cohesion was conducted by employing the 4-item scale developed by [Gallyer, Stanley, Day, and Joiner \(2020\)](#). The study investigated the soldiers' perspectives regarding shared values, trust, teamwork, and collective commitment within their respective military units.

### 3.8 Respondents' Characteristics

The study included a diverse range of military personnel from various units within the Indonesian Army. Within the sample population, it was observed that 78.5% of the participants identified as male, whereas 21.5% identified as female. Regarding the distribution of age, the individuals involved in the study displayed diverse demographic characteristics. Specifically, 32.2% of the participants belonged to the 18–25 age group, 48.3% fell within the 26–35 age range, 15.6% were between 36 and 45 years old, and 3.9% were aged 46–55 years. In terms of hierarchical position, the study's sample encompassed a diverse range of military personnel. Specifically, 54.1% of the participants were enlisted personnel, 29.5% were non-commissioned officers (NCOs), and 16.4% were commissioned officers. The military's years of service demonstrated a broad spectrum of individuals who participated.

In particular, a total of 18.8% of respondents indicated a duration of service of less than 5 years, whereas 31.2% reported a tenure ranging from 6 to 10 years. A considerable proportion, specifically 29.0%, was observed to fall within the age range of 11–15 years, while 12.2% of individuals reported having served in the military for 16–20 years. Additionally, 8.8% of participants indicated having a military tenure exceeding 20 years, demonstrating a high level of commitment to their service. The participants exhibited diverse educational backgrounds, encompassing a wide array of qualifications. It is worth mentioning that a significant proportion of individuals, specifically 22.9%, possessed a high school diploma or an equivalent qualification.

Furthermore, a substantial percentage of the population, amounting to 48.0%, held a bachelor's degree. Similarly, a notable proportion, accounting for 29.1%, had attained a master's degree or a higher level of education. In conclusion, the demographic characteristics presented in this study offered a comprehensive and intricate depiction of the participants, indicating a balanced and inclusive sample that effectively reflected the heterogeneity of military personnel in the Indonesian Army.

## 4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

### 4.1 Measurement Model

The analytical procedures utilised in this study involved the use of SmartPLS v.4 software, which employed the technique of structural equation modelling (SEM). In order to enhance the reliability of our analysis, we initially regarded participants' experience as a notable determinant of unit cohesion. Consequently, we rigorously accounted for the participants' prior experiences prior to conducting hypothesis testing. Following this, a confirmatory factor analysis was performed, which indicated that all items related to the variables under investigation demonstrated factor loadings exceeding the threshold of 0.70. The statement suggests that each measure was clearly associated with its corresponding variable, in accordance with established guidelines (Hair, Risher, Sarstedt, & Ringle, 2019; Noor, Mansoor, & Shamim, 2022).

In addition, we conducted a thorough analysis of the reliabilities and validities of our measurements by employing Cronbach's  $\alpha$  (CA), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) as calculated by Sulasmi (2021). As indicated in Table 1, the subsequent findings revealed that the reliabilities and validities values were within the recommended thresholds, with CA and CR surpassing 0.70. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) values linked to the constructs examined in this study exceeded the threshold of 0.50. This finding provides additional support for the "convergent validity" of our measurement instruments (Becker et al., 2023).

**Table 1: Factor loadings, reliability, and validity**

Constructs/Items	FL	AVE	CR	CA
<b>Autocratic Leadership</b>		<b>0.572</b>	<b>0.930</b>	<b>0.843</b>
AL1: My leaders closely monitor their units to ensure they are performing correctly.	0.728			
AL2: My leaders tell their unit what to do, how to do it, and when they want it done.	0.766			
AL3: When someone makes a mistake, my leaders tell them not to ever do that again and make a note of it.	0.782			
AL4: My leaders retain the final decision-making authority within the group.	0.742			
AL5: My leaders do not consider suggestions made by soldiers, as they do not have the time.	0.753			
AL6: New hires are not allowed to make any decisions unless it is approved by the supervisors.	0.777			
AL7: Soldiers are motivated by a need for security.	0.755			

<b>AL8:</b> When something goes wrong, my leaders tell soldiers that a procedure is not working correctly, and they establish a new one.	0.751			
<b>AL9:</b> Soldiers need clear rewards and punishments in order to complete tasks and meet goals.	0.720			
<b>AL10:</b> My leaders do not consider the suggestions made by soldiers.	0.786			
<b>Democratic Leadership</b>		<b>0.626</b>	<b>0.870</b>	<b>0.726</b>
<b>DL1:</b> Foster's friendly relationship.	0.775			
<b>DL2:</b> Gives opportunity for decision-making.	0.794			
<b>DL3:</b> Supports soldiers' priority needs.	0.766			
<b>DL4:</b> Encourage soldiers to accomplish directed tasks.	0.828			
<b>Transformational Leadership</b>		<b>0.621</b>	<b>0.830</b>	<b>0.790</b>
<b>TL1:</b> Provides equipment and facilities.	0.813			
<b>TL2:</b> Open-minded in extracting and giving feedback.	0.842			
<b>TL3:</b> Consistently makes changes from the feedback.	0.703			
<b>Team Communication</b>		<b>0.547</b>	<b>0.894</b>	<b>0.765</b>
<b>TC1:</b> Sympathetic to each other's point of view.	0.703			
<b>TC2:</b> Trust each other.	0.725			
<b>TC3:</b> Communicate our feelings honestly.	0.729			
<b>TC4:</b> Use an appropriate tone of voice.	0.767			
<b>TC5:</b> Share thoughts with one another.	0.760			
<b>TC6:</b> Display mutual respect.	0.766			
<b>TC7:</b> Make sure all soldiers are included.	0.725			
<b>Unit Cohesion</b>		<b>0.656</b>	<b>0.884</b>	<b>0.726</b>
<b>UC1:</b> The members of my unit cooperate with each other.	0.846			
<b>UC2:</b> The members of my unit know they can depend on each other.	0.798			
<b>UC3:</b> The members of my unit stand up for each other.	0.821			
<b>UC4:</b> The members of my unit help each other.	0.773			
<b>Confidence in Command</b>		<b>0.619</b>	<b>0.928</b>	<b>0.731</b>
<b>CIC1:</b> My direct boss treats us all equally, without distinctions.	0.752			
<b>CIC2:</b> In my Unit, my direct boss has managed to get us to form a team.	0.803			
<b>CIC3:</b> When we do something well, my direct boss congratulates us.	0.804			
<b>CIC4:</b> My direct boss is the first to comply with the rules. He sets an example for us.	0.797			
<b>CIC5:</b> If I had to do it again, I would like to go back to my direct boss again.	0.761			
<b>CIC6:</b> The physical preparation of my direct boss is good for accomplishing the mission.	0.808			
<b>CIC7:</b> I think my direct boss would know how to get us out of any dangerous situation.	0.794			
<b>CIC8:</b> The knowledge and training of my direct boss are adequate.	0.771			

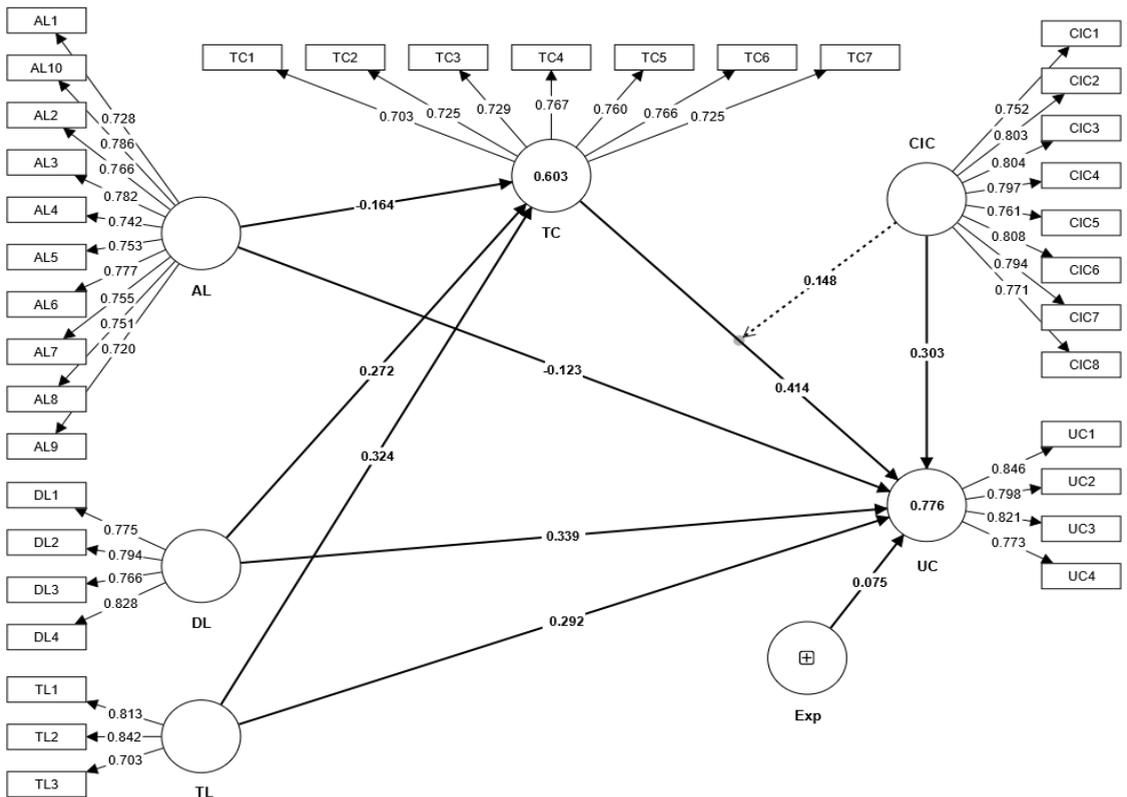
*“Note: FL= Factor loadings AVE=Average Variance Extracted; CR=Composite Reliability; CA= Cronbach's Alpha*

In addition, in order to mitigate the potential problem of multicollinearity among the study constructs, we utilised the "Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) ratio" technique. As depicted in Table 2, the HTMT values pertaining to all the variables under investigation consistently remained below the recommended threshold of 0.85, as advocated by Henseler, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2015), esteemed scholars in the respective field. The observed result provides strong support for the presence of discriminant validity among the variables being studied, confirming the uniqueness of each construct being analysed.

**Table 2: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio**

Constructs	Mean	Std	1	2	3	4	5	6
Autocratic Leadership	4.05	0.88	<b>0.756</b>					
Democratic Leadership	4.09	0.85	0.523	<b>0.791</b>				
Transformational Leadership	3.89	1.08	0.481	0.601	<b>0.788</b>			
Team communication	3.97	1.03	0.507	0.499	0.645	<b>0.739</b>		
Unit Cohesion	4.01	0.96	0.440	0.543	0.554	0.462	<b>0.809</b>	
Confidence in Command	3.85	1.11	0.476	0.627	0.596	0.611	0.570	<b>0.786</b>

*“Note: The square roots of AVEs of the constructs are shown in bold in diagonal.”*



**Figure 2: Full Measurement Model**

## 4.2 Structural Model

In order to examine the hypothesised relationships, we conducted an analysis of the structural model using the SmartPLS v.4 software. In this study, the "Coefficient of Determination (R<sup>2</sup>)" was employed as a measure to assess the alignment between the theoretical framework and the empirical data. The results revealed a significant increase in the R<sup>2</sup> value of 77.6% in relation to unit cohesion among the group of Indonesian soldiers when taking into account all internal variables. Furthermore, the analysis demonstrated a significant increase in the R<sup>2</sup> value by 60.3% when considering team communication, based on the different leadership styles. The results of this study provide strong evidence supporting the validity and relevance of the research model. They highlight the consistent agreement between the proposed relationships and the data that was observed.

## 4.3 Direct Hypotheses

The outcomes of this study underscore the substantial impact of autocratic leadership ( $\beta = -123^*$ ,  $t = 2.798$ ), democratic leadership ( $\beta = 0.339^{***}$ ,  $t = 5.739$ ), and transformational leadership ( $\beta = 0.292^{**}$ ,  $t = 4.561$ ) on unit cohesion within the Indonesian Army. Additionally, the results elucidate a noteworthy and positive relationship between autocratic leadership ( $\beta = 0.164^{**}$ ,  $t = 3.156$ ), democratic leadership ( $\beta = 0.272^{**}$ ,  $t = 4.272$ ), transformational leadership ( $\beta = 0.324^{**}$ ,  $t = 5.436$ ), and team communication. Simultaneously, team communication was established as positively associated with unit cohesion ( $\beta = 0.414^{***}$ ,  $t = 6.435$ ). The results of this study offer empirical evidence in favour of hypotheses H1a, H1b, H2a, H2b, and H3, shedding light on the relationship between leadership styles, team communication, and unit cohesion within the specific context of the research.

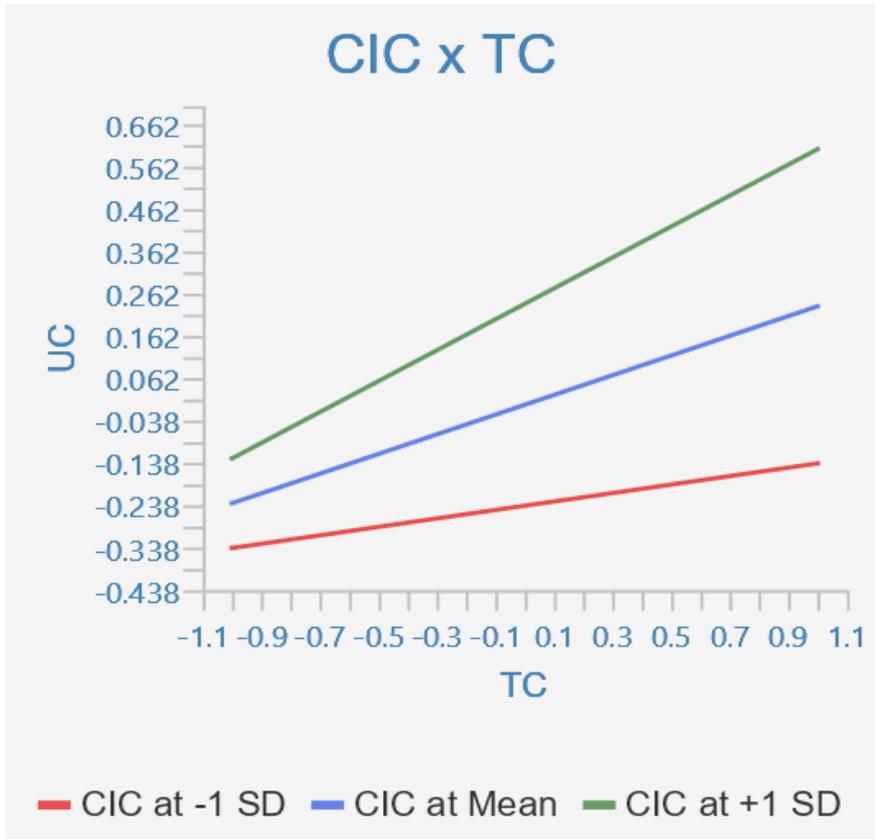
## 4.4 Mediations Hypotheses

The study's findings lent support to the mediation hypotheses (H4a, H4b). These findings provided clear evidence of the indirect effects of autocratic leadership ( $\beta = 0.139^*$ ,  $t = 2.930$ ), democratic leadership ( $\beta = 0.218^{**}$ ,  $t = 3.889$ ), and transformational leadership ( $\beta = 0.302^{***}$ ,  $t = 5.076$ ) on unit cohesion within the Indonesian Army. These effects transpired through the mediating role of team communication, as illustrated in [Table 3](#).

## 4.5 Moderation Hypotheses

In order to evaluate the impact of soldiers' confidence in command on the correlation between team communication and unit cohesion, we utilised the PLS-SEM v.4 software and employed a product indicator approach. This involved creating an interaction term labelled IC\*TC. The findings of our analysis revealed that the inclusion of interaction

terms had a significant positive effect on the relationship between team communication and unit cohesion ( $\beta = 0.148^{**}$ ,  $t = 3.001$ ). Furthermore, the R2 coefficient for unit cohesion exhibited an initial value of 61.2%. However, after incorporating interaction terms, there was a significant increase, resulting in a final value of 77.6%. The observed increase in explanatory capacity, which accounted for 16.4% of the variance, was ascribed to the interplay between soldiers' trust in leadership and effective team communication. Moreover, the visual representation of the moderation results is presented in Figure 3, which supports the acceptance of Hypothesis 5 in this study.



**Figure 3:** Interaction plots of green altruism and green brand trust

Figure 3 illustrates a graphical representation of the relationship between soldiers' confidence in command and team communication's impact on unit cohesion. The line representing higher levels of confidence in command displays a steeper incline, indicating a stronger association compared to the line representing lower confidence levels. The aforementioned findings not only emphasise the importance of soldiers' trust in their leadership but also the influential role it plays in enhancing the effect of team communication on unit cohesion.

**Table 3: Hypothesis Testing Results**

	Hypotheses	Std. Beta	t-Value	p-values	Supported
H1a	AL→UC	-0.123	2.798	0.011	Yes
H1b	DL→UC	0.339	5.739	0.000	Yes
H1c	TL→UC	0.292	4.561	0.000	Yes
H2a	AL→TC	-0.164	3.156	0.009	Yes
H2b	DL→TC	0.272	4.272	0.001	Yes
H2c	TL→TC	0.324	5.436	0.000	Yes
H3	TC→UC	0.414	6.435	0.000	Yes
H4a	AL→TC→UC	0.139	2.930	0.011	Yes
H4b	DL→TC→UC	0.218	3.889	0.005	Yes
H4c	TL→TC→UC	0.302	5.076	0.000	Yes
H5	CIC*TC→UC	0.148	3.001	0.009	Yes

*Where: AL=Autocratic Leadership; DL=Democratic Leadership; TL=Transformational Leadership; TC=Team communication; UC=Unit Cohesion; CIC=Confidence in Command*

## 5. DISCUSSIONS

### 5.1 Key Findings

The study's empirical findings provide confirmation of the significant impact that leadership styles have on unit cohesion. The aforementioned finding aligns cohesively with previous scholarly investigations that have shed light on the complex dynamics between leadership behaviours and team productivity, emphasising their significant influence on the overall structure of an organisation (Legionosuko, Widodo, & Halkis, 2022). This observation suggests that leadership styles have a significant impact not only on the decision-making process but also on the team's morale and the overall sense of belonging among its members. Within this particular framework, the significance of leadership styles is undeniably recognised as the central point around which unit cohesion revolves, exerting an impact not only on the soldiers' perspectives but also on the overall operational efficacy of the military institution as a whole. The results of the study clearly indicated that autocratic leaders have a detrimental effect on team cohesion in comparison to democratic and transformational leaders.

The results of the study also indicated that various leadership styles, namely autocratic, democratic, and transformational, have a significant impact on the quality and dynamics of team communication within military units. The present study's results are consistent with previous scholarly investigations that have explored the influence of leadership styles on communication in military settings (Nissinen, Dormantaitè, & Dungveckis, 2022; Suseno, Listyaningsih, & Maryudi, 2022). The autocratic leadership style has consistently been linked to a communication approach that is more directive in nature, often characterised by a limited presence of open dialogue (Dawy, Yohana, & Widodo, 2022).

In contrast, previous research has established a correlation between democratic and transformational leadership styles and the manifestation of participatory and open communication patterns (Sulaiman, Hadna, Darwin, & Kutanegara, 2023). The aforementioned findings highlight the significance of leadership behaviours in influencing the communication dynamics within military units. This phenomenon could be attributed to the characteristic of autocratic leaders, who tend to exert greater control and authority, resulting in a communication style that primarily involves the dissemination of orders and directives in a unilateral manner. In contrast, democratic leaders promote active engagement and the solicitation of input, thereby cultivating bi-directional communication and facilitating open dialogues. Transformational leaders possess the ability to inspire and motivate individuals, thereby fostering an environment that encourages enthusiastic and collaborative communication. Hence, it is evident that leadership styles have a significant impact on the dynamics of communication within military units.

The findings of the analysis further substantiated hypothesis 3, revealing a strong association between effective team communication and increased unit cohesion. The aforementioned discovery aligns with a significant corpus of scholarly works that underscore the crucial significance of communication in fostering trust, elucidating objectives, and bolstering collaboration within military organisations (Valor-Segura et al., 2020). The correlation between effective communication and enhanced unit cohesion has been consistently established in the literature. This connection is attributed to the ability of soldiers to exchange information, address conflicts, and collaborate harmoniously in pursuit of shared goals (Fors Brandebo, Börjesson, & Hilmansson, 2022).

The central focus of this discourse pertains to the fundamental role of communication. Effective and transparent communication facilitates the comprehension of soldiers' responsibilities, the dissemination of vital information, and the establishment of trust among their colleagues. The act of soldiers engaging in information exchange, expressing concerns, and collaborating in an effective manner contributes to the enhancement of their collective commitment and shared values, thereby fostering a greater sense of unit cohesion.

The fourth hypothesis proposes that team communication mediates the relationship between leadership styles and unit cohesion. The analysis conducted in our study has provided confirmation of the hypothesis, indicating that the influence of leadership styles on unit cohesion is indeed mediated by team communication. The aforementioned discovery is consistent with prior studies that emphasise the intermediary function of communication in the correlation between leadership and diverse outcomes (Gallyer, Stanley, Day, & Joiner, 2020). The influence of leadership styles on communication patterns has a subsequent impact on organisational outcomes.

Within the military domain, the mediation effect underscores the significance of proficient leadership behaviours in shaping communication dynamics, which in turn exert an influence on the cohesiveness of a unit. The outcome of this mediation effect can be attributed to the sequential nature of these relationships. Leadership styles play a crucial role in shaping the dynamics of communication within organisational units. The establishment of effective communication is known to play a crucial role in fostering unit cohesion within a given context (Bekesiene & Smaliukiene, 2022). This study emphasises the role of communication as a mediator, indicating that leadership behaviours have a dual effect on cohesion. They directly influence cohesion and also indirectly influence it by affecting communication dynamics.

The findings of the analysis provided support for the moderation hypothesis, indicating that the level of confidence soldiers have in their command plays a moderating role in the relationship between team communication and unit cohesion. This discovery is consistent with the concept that soldiers' perceptions of leadership have the potential to impact their interpretation and response to communication dynamics (Lansing et al., 2023). When soldiers possess a strong sense of trust and belief in their leaders, they are likely to exhibit greater openness and receptiveness towards communication initiatives, interpreting them in a favourable manner.

Consequently, this positive interpretation of communication efforts contributes to the reinforcement of unit cohesion. Soldiers who possess trust and confidence in their commanding officers are inclined to interpret communication in a positive manner, perceiving it as a factor that enhances cohesion within their unit. The presence of trust serves as a moderating element that enhances the positive correlation between communication and cohesion.

## 5.2 Theoretical Significance of the Study

This research enhances the theoretical comprehension of leadership within military environments. This study offers empirical evidence indicating that various leadership styles have discernible effects on both team communication and unit cohesion. This study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on social identity theory by emphasising the intricate connection between leadership behaviours and group dynamics, specifically within the context of a military environment. The recognition of team communication as an intermediary factor between leadership styles and unit cohesion highlights the importance of communication effectiveness in translating leadership into desired results. This underscores the significance of communication processes in both organisational and military settings.

This study also contributes to the existing body of literature by introducing the concept of soldiers' confidence in command as a moderator. By examining the role of confidence

in team communication, the study provides insights into how this factor influences cohesion. This theoretical extension underscores the significance of taking into account the perceptions and trust of soldiers as variables that have the potential to magnify the impacts of communication and foster a unified team. Theoretical Insights in the Context of the Military: This study provides theoretical insights that are specific to the military context, elucidating the dynamics of leadership styles, communication, and confidence in command within military units.

Moreover, through the analysis of the mediating role of team communication, this study underscores the sequential nature of the connections among leadership, communication, and cohesion. This emphasises the significance of comprehending the fundamental mechanisms that link leadership behaviours to organisational outcomes, providing theoretical groundwork for prospective research in analogous settings. Ultimately, while the primary focus of this research pertained to the Indonesian Army, its theoretical implications have broader applicability in the realm of cross-cultural studies. The adaptation of leadership and communication theories to accommodate cultural variations within military organisations can contribute to a more comprehensive comprehension of leadership dynamics within diverse military contexts.

## 6. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

The outcomes emphasise the importance of leadership strategies in shaping team dynamics and fostering cohesion within a unit. The armed forces have the opportunity to utilise this knowledge in order to tailor leadership training programmes that foster democratic and transformational leadership behaviours. This, in turn, will facilitate enhanced transparency and efficiency in communication among units. Recognising the pivotal role of team communication, military commanders may place emphasis on providing communication training to both soldiers and officers. The enhancement of cohesion and mission accomplishment can be facilitated through the cultivation of effective communication skills, the promotion of openness, and the encouragement of information exchange. The assessment and selection processes within military leadership often encompass an examination of various leadership approaches and their potential impact on the cohesiveness of a unit. Assessing leadership candidates' ability to adopt democratic or transformational leadership behaviours may lead to the formation of more cohesive and productive teams.

Given the significant impact of soldiers' trust in their command, it is imperative for military leaders to allocate resources towards the implementation of strategies aimed at fostering and strengthening this trust. Effective and transparent communication, consistency in decision-making processes, and accessible leadership are key factors that contribute to the development of trust among soldiers, thereby enhancing their confidence in the leadership. Military units have the capacity to implement team-

building exercises and initiatives that serve to inspire soldiers to engage in collaborative efforts and foster the development of trust. These activities have the potential to enhance solidarity and foster the establishment of a more cohesive and effective military force. Additionally, the concept of leadership adaptation is of great significance. Leaders possess the ability to adapt their leadership styles in order to effectively respond to the unique requirements of different circumstances and the dynamics within their teams.

The acknowledgement of the necessity to employ different degrees of autocratic, democratic, or transformational leadership in different circumstances can result in leadership that is more adaptable and effective. Ultimately, the findings of this study have practical implications that result in improved operational efficiency. Organisations that possess cohesive units characterised by effective communication and robust leadership are more proficient in managing intricate missions and demonstrating adaptability in demanding environments. In addition, the implementation of effective communication techniques and the cultivation of trust can contribute to the successful resolution of conflicts within military units. Soldiers who possess trust in their leaders and maintain effective channels of communication are more inclined to engage in constructive conflict resolution, thereby mitigating the likelihood of internal disagreements.

## **7. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS**

The focus of this study revolved around the Indonesian Army, and it should be noted that the findings may not possess direct applicability to other military contexts characterised by distinct cultural backgrounds. Future studies should aim to examine the impact of cultural variations on the interrelationships among leadership, communication, and cohesion within military units. The research employed a cross-sectional design, which allowed for the examination of associations at a specific moment in time without considering any temporal changes. This constraint hinders our ability to draw causal conclusions or assess the temporal progression of these relationships. This limitation can be addressed in future longitudinal studies through the examination of the temporal dynamics of leadership, communication, and cohesion.

The research relied on self-report measures, potentially leading to the introduction of response bias. There is a possibility that soldiers may have exhibited response bias by providing socially desirable answers, which could have potentially influenced the accuracy of the data. In order to enhance the validity of the data, future research endeavours may consider integrating additional objective measures or observational techniques. Finally, it should be noted that the ultimate dataset consisted of 410 participants. However, it is important to acknowledge that there was heterogeneity in the sample sizes across various ranks and units. The presence of variability in the study may have had an impact on the findings, particularly when analysing the effects of

leadership approaches and communication within a range of military roles. In order to enhance the robustness and generalizability of future research findings, it is imperative to endeavour towards the utilisation of samples that are more balanced and representative in nature.

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