

-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

MILITARY EXCELLENCE: UNRAVELLING THE IMPACT OF TRANSPARENT LEADERSHIP, COMMUNICATION PROWESS, AND PERCEIVED JUSTICE ON SOLDIERS' PERFORMANCE

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—Abstract—

In the complex milieu of military operations, optimizing soldier performance stands as a paramount objective. This research explores the complex relationships among leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, soldiers' engagement, and performance within the Indonesian Army. Utilizing a quantitative approach, data were collected from 453 military personnel and subjected to multistage regression analysis. The study reveals that leadership transparency, communication quality, and perceived fairness significantly influence soldiers' engagement, which, in turn, impacts their performance positively. Furthermore, the research underscores the mediating role of soldiers' engagement and the moderating effect of perceived justice on these relationships. These findings offer valuable insights for military organizations seeking to enhance performance by fostering transparent leadership, effective communication, and a culture of fairness. The study's significance lies in its contribution to understanding organizational behavior within military contexts and its practical implications for performance optimization strategies.

Keywords: Soldier Performance; Leadership Transparency; Communication Quality; Perceived Fairness; Soldiers' Engagement

1. INTRODUCTION

In the intricate and high-stakes domain of military operations, pursuing and maintaining excellence in performance emerge as fundamental imperatives (Siagian et al., 2022).

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The multifaceted challenges and dynamic nature of modern warfare necessitate a relentless commitment to achieving the highest standards of proficiency and effectiveness (Bekesiene & Smaliukiene, 2022). Besides, soldiers' performance encompasses a wide array of measures that reflect the effectiveness and efficiency of military units, including combat readiness, mission success, teamwork, and adaptability (Dawy et al., 2022). The consequences of subpar performance in the military can be grave, affecting not only the success of specific operations but also the lives of service members and civilians (Phayal & Prins, 2020). Moreover, the nature of contemporary military engagements often demands adaptability and innovation (Gibson-Fall, 2021). Besides, learning from past experiences and rapidly evolving strategies and tactics is pivotal in achieving and sustaining excellence. This adaptability is reinforced by a culture of accountability and a dedication to continuous improvement (Zordi et al., 2022).

Ultimately, excellence in military performance is an ongoing pursuit, reflecting the unwavering commitment of military personnel to safeguarding their nations' interests and maintaining peace and security on a global scale (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). Researchers reported that excellence in military performance is achieved through rigorous training, meticulous planning, and the continuous cultivation of leadership skills (Liggans et al., 2019; Saurav & Kishor, 2022). However, it has also been found that in the realm of military operations, the efficacy of military units transcends mere training and equipment superiority; instead, it is a delicate interplay of various factors (Bekesiene & Smaliukiene, 2022; Sefidan et al., 2021). This research paper explores the intricate relationships among the critical elements, including leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, and their profound impact on soldiers' performance, unravelling the underlying mechanisms underpinning military excellence.

Leadership transparency refers to the extent to which leaders within the military organization provide clear and open communication about objectives, decisions, and expectations (Brooks & White, 2022). Effective leaders inspire, guide, and motivate their teams toward achieving mission objectives. Their decision-making skills, adaptability, and ability to lead by example are essential for fostering a cohesive and high-performing unit (Liggans et al., 2019). Communication, both vertically and horizontally, serves as the lifeblood of military operations. Clear and concise communication channels facilitate the dissemination of critical information, enabling soldiers to make informed decisions in the heat of battle (Fosse et al., 2019). Effective communication also bolsters morale and cohesion, fostering a shared sense of purpose and teamwork. Furthermore, Perceived fairness refers to the subjective evaluation of the fairness and equity of decision-making processes and treatment within the organization (Harkness, 2022). The perception of fairness within military ranks significantly influences morale and commitment. Soldiers who believe they are treated justly are more likely to display unwavering dedication and resilience. Conversely, perceptions of unfairness can lead to dissent and erosion of unit cohesion (Rehardiningtyas & Almubaroq, 2022).

At the heart of this research lies the pivotal concept of soldiers' engagement, which serves as a crucial mediator in the intricate relationship between the independent and dependent variables, soldiers' performance. Soldiers' engagement represents the emotional and cognitive commitment individuals pour into their military roles and responsibilities (Finkelstein-Fox et al., 2021). It encapsulates the extent to which soldiers forge meaningful connections with their duties, leaders, and the organization as a whole. This mediating role of soldiers' engagement stands as a pillar in comprehending how the independent variables exert their influence on soldiers' performance, albeit indirectly (Gibson-Fall, 2021). As soldiers become more emotionally and cognitively engaged with their tasks and the military ecosystem, their commitment and motivation surge, subsequently impacting their overall performance (Basak et al., 2022). In essence, soldiers' engagement bridges the various facets of leadership, communication, fairness, and the ultimate outcome of performance, shedding light on the intricate dynamics that underlie military excellence.

Furthermore, this research acknowledges the potential moderating effect of perceived justice on the relationship between soldiers' engagement and performance. Perceived justice refers to the subjective evaluation of the fairness and equity of the organizational environment (Mason, 2016). In the military context, perceived justice refers to the subjective evaluation of fairness in various aspects of a soldier's experience, such as decision-making processes, resource allocation, and treatment by superiors and peers (Frone & Blais, 2019). When soldiers perceive these aspects as fair, it fosters a positive psychological environment, bolstering their engagement with their roles and responsibilities (Allehbi, 2022). To comprehensively investigate the intricate relationships and dynamics among leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, soldiers' engagement, perceived justice, and soldiers' performance within a military context, the current study aims to;

- Investigate the impact of leadership transparency, communication quality, and perceived fairness on soldiers' engagement and performance.
- Investigate the potential impact of soldiers' engagement on their performance.
- Investigate how soldiers' engagement mediates the relationships between leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, and soldiers' performance.
- Examine how perceived justice moderates the relationship between soldiers' engagement and their performance, considering situations where perceived fairness varies.
- Based on the study findings, offer practical recommendations and strategies for military organizations to enhance transparency, communication, fairness, engagement, and, ultimately, the performance of their soldiers.

By comprehensively examining these factors, this study aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of the determinants of military excellence and provide actionable insights for military leaders and policymakers to optimize organizational performance in the armed forces.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

The study's theoretical foundation is rooted in Social Exchange Theory, which provides a robust framework for understanding the dynamics of interactions and relationships among individuals within organizations such as military units. Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals engage in relationships and interactions with others based on the expectation of receiving benefits and avoiding costs (Wang et al., 2019). The theory suggests that when military leaders exhibit transparency in decision-making and communication, soldiers are more likely to perceive benefits in the form of increased trust, understanding, and a sense of inclusion (Lester et al., 2022). This, in turn, fosters soldiers' engagement as they feel more committed to their roles and leaders, expecting positive outcomes (Zhao et al., 2020). Similarly, when fairness is perceived in resource allocation and treatment, soldiers are more likely to reciprocate with higher engagement levels and improved performance (Mohammadzadeh, 2019). Social Exchange Theory also supports the notion that soldiers' engagement can lead to improved performance. When soldiers invest emotionally and cognitively in their military duties, they are more inclined to put forth extra effort, engage in proactive behaviors, and strive for excellence, ultimately contributing to enhanced performance (Duan, 2020). Within the framework of Social Exchange Theory, soldiers' engagement can be seen as the mechanism through which leadership transparency, communication quality, and perceived fairness translate into improved performance. Soldiers engage because they perceive benefits from transparent leadership, effective communication, and fairness, which positively influences their performance (Maruyama et al., 2019). Social Exchange Theory also acknowledges the role of perceived justice in moderating relationships. In this context, perceived justice can moderate the relationship between soldiers' engagement and performance (Rindipati & Hinduan, 2021). When soldiers perceive fairness, the positive impact of engagement on performance is likely to be stronger, reinforcing the notion of reciprocity and positive exchange. Hence, Social Exchange Theory elucidates the underlying mechanisms and dynamics, offering valuable insights for both theoretical understanding and practical application within military organizations.

2.1 The Impact of Leadership Transparency, Communication Quality, and Perceived Fairness on Soldiers' Performance

The effectiveness of military units transcends the mere possession of advanced weaponry and tactical proficiency. It is intrinsically linked to the quality of

leadership, the effectiveness of communication channels, and the perception of fairness within the ranks (Lester et al., 2022). Research shows that transparent leadership fosters an atmosphere of trust and mutual understanding, which is crucial for the cohesion of military units (Siswanto et al., 2020). Soldiers who perceive transparency in leadership are more likely to comprehend the rationale behind directives, resulting in a stronger commitment to executing orders effectively (Bahir, 2020). Moreover, transparent leadership encourages open communication, enabling soldiers to voice concerns and feedback, ultimately contributing to improved decision-making and operational effectiveness (Bhaskara et al., 2020). Besides, clear and timely communication is fundamental in ensuring that soldiers have access to critical information required for mission success (Sefidan et al., 2021). Effective communication enhances situational awareness, minimizes misunderstandings, and facilitates rapid responses to changing circumstances (Jiang et al., 2020). It ensures that soldiers are well-informed and aligned with the mission objectives, thus enhancing their ability to execute tasks efficiently and adapt to evolving scenarios. Simultaneously, perceived fairness reflects soldiers' subjective evaluation of equitable treatment, resource allocation, and opportunities within the military organization (Brandebot et al., 2022). When soldiers perceive fairness in these domains, they experience a heightened sense of organizational justice (Nissinen et al., 2022). This perception of fairness is associated with increased morale, job satisfaction, and commitment. Soldiers who believe they are treated justly are more likely to display higher levels of motivation and dedication to their roles (Álvarez et al., 2019). Consequently, their overall performance is significantly enhanced, leading to a more effective and cohesive military unit. Hence, it is hypothesized that;

H1 a, b, and c: *Leadership transparency, communication quality, and perceived fairness are tangible determinants of soldiers' performance.*

2.2 The Impact of Leadership Transparency, Communication Quality, and Perceived Fairness on Soldiers' Engagement.

Transparent leaders who openly communicate their intentions, decisions, and the rationale behind them instill trust and confidence among their subordinates (Torres et al., 2022). Soldiers are more likely to be engaged when they have a clear understanding of the overarching mission, their roles within it, and the purpose behind various tasks and directives (Harkness, 2022). Scholars are reported that, transparent leadership fosters a sense of inclusion and involvement, reinforcing soldiers' emotional and cognitive commitment to their military duties (Wright et al., 2019). At the same time, effective communication ensures that information flows seamlessly within the military unit, enabling soldiers to stay informed about mission objectives, strategies, and tactical details (Semino, 2021). High-quality communication channels

facilitate the dissemination of critical information in a clear and timely manner, enhancing situational awareness (Hollands et al., 2019). Soldiers who are well-informed and perceive that their voices are heard through effective communication are more likely to be engaged, as they can align their actions with mission requirements and adapt to dynamic operational environments. Additionally, when soldiers perceive fairness in resource allocation, opportunities, and treatment by superiors and peers, they develop a sense of organizational justice (Brohi et al., 2021). This perception of fairness is closely linked to soldiers' motivation, job satisfaction, and commitment to their roles. Soldiers who believe they are treated justly are more likely to be emotionally and cognitively engaged in their duties (Legionosuko et al., 2022). Based on the existing literature, logical arguments and theory we propose the following hypotheses:

H2 a, b, and c: *Leadership transparency, communication quality, and perceived fairness positively influences soldiers' engagement.*

2.3 Impact of soldiers' engagement on their performance

Soldiers' engagement reflects the degree to which military personnel connect with their roles, leaders, and the organization as a whole (Hall & Deinla, 2021). Engaged soldiers exhibit a heightened sense of commitment, motivation, and attachment to their military duties. Engagement encompasses not only the willingness to carry out assigned tasks but also the proactive inclination to go above and beyond to achieve mission success (Basak et al., 2022). Likewise, Gibson-Fall (2021) reported engaged soldiers are intrinsically motivated to excel in their roles. Their emotional attachment to their duties and their commitment to the mission drive them to put forth greater effort and energy in their tasks. Simultaneously, Finkelstein-Fox et al. (2021) engaged soldiers tend to maintain a heightened focus on their responsibilities. They are more likely to stay attuned to mission objectives, follow instructions meticulously, and execute tasks with precision. Additionally, research states that soldiers who are emotionally engaged are often more adaptable in dynamic and uncertain operational environments (Adis et al., 2021). Their commitment to the mission and their sense of duty drive them to respond effectively to unexpected challenges and changing circumstances. Based on the existing literature and theoretical foundations, we propose the following hypothesis:

H3: *Soldiers' engagement positively influences their performance.*

2.4 Soldiers' Engagement as a Mediator

Additional to direct impacts it is projected that soldiers' engagement, characterized by an emotional and cognitive commitment to military duties, is a pivotal variable that can mediate the relationships between leadership transparency, communication

quality, perceived fairness, and soldiers' performance. As research demonstrates that transparent leadership fosters trust and understanding among soldiers (Liggans et al., 2019). Engaged soldiers are more likely to appreciate and internalize transparent communication from leaders, resulting in a stronger commitment to the mission and enhanced motivation to perform well. In addition, effective communication channels facilitate the flow of mission-critical information (Phayal & Prins, 2020). Engaged soldiers are more receptive to high-quality communication, as it aligns with their commitment to their roles (Frone & Blais, 2019). Clear and timely communication enhances engagement by ensuring soldiers are well-informed and empowered to execute tasks effectively. Furthermore, soldiers who perceive fairness in resource allocation and treatment are more likely to feel valued and included within the organization. Engaged soldiers, in turn, are more inclined to reciprocate perceived fairness with a heightened commitment to their duties and increased effort to excel in their performance (Nissinen et al., 2022). Building on the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence, we propose the following hypothesis regarding the mediating role of soldiers' engagement:

H4 a, b, and c: *Soldiers' engagement mediates the relationships between leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, and soldiers' performance.*

2.5 Perceived Justice as a Moderator

Perceived justice within a military context pertains to soldiers' perceptions of fairness in matters such as resource allocation, treatment by superiors and peers, and opportunities for career advancement (Brandebou et al., 2022). Previously, it is established that, perceived justice positively influence soldiers' performance. Where as we project that when soldiers perceive fairness, their engagement is likely to have a more significant and positive effect on their performance. Research revealed that, in contexts characterized by high perceived justice, engaged soldiers are more likely to experience heightened motivation, commitment, and morale, (Harkness, 2022; Sefidan et al., 2021; Siagian et al., 2022). It reflects that, perceived justice reinforces soldiers' belief in the reciprocity of effort and reward. In contrast, the situations where perceived justice is low, the positive influence of soldiers' engagement on performance may be dampened. It is based on the understanding soldiers who perceive unfair treatment may struggle with reduced morale, trust issues, and diminished commitment, hindering their performance potential (Álvarez et al., 2019; Brandebou et al., 2022; Hall & Deinla, 2021). Hence, it is postulated that:

H5: *Perceived justice moderates the relationship between soldiers' engagement and their performance such that in the presence of high perceived justice, the positive impact of soldiers' engagement on performance will be strengthened.*

2.6 Theoretical Framework of the Study

Figure 1 presents the theoretical framework that underpins this study, encapsulating the intricate relationships among key variables. At the core of this framework is soldiers' engagement, which serves as the focal point through which the impact of leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, and perceived justice is channeled into soldiers' performance. While perceived justice acts as a moderator, shaping the strength and nature of the relationship between engagement and performance. This theoretical framework provides a comprehensive roadmap for understanding the multifaceted dynamics within military organizations and guides the empirical investigation of their interconnected effects on performance outcomes.

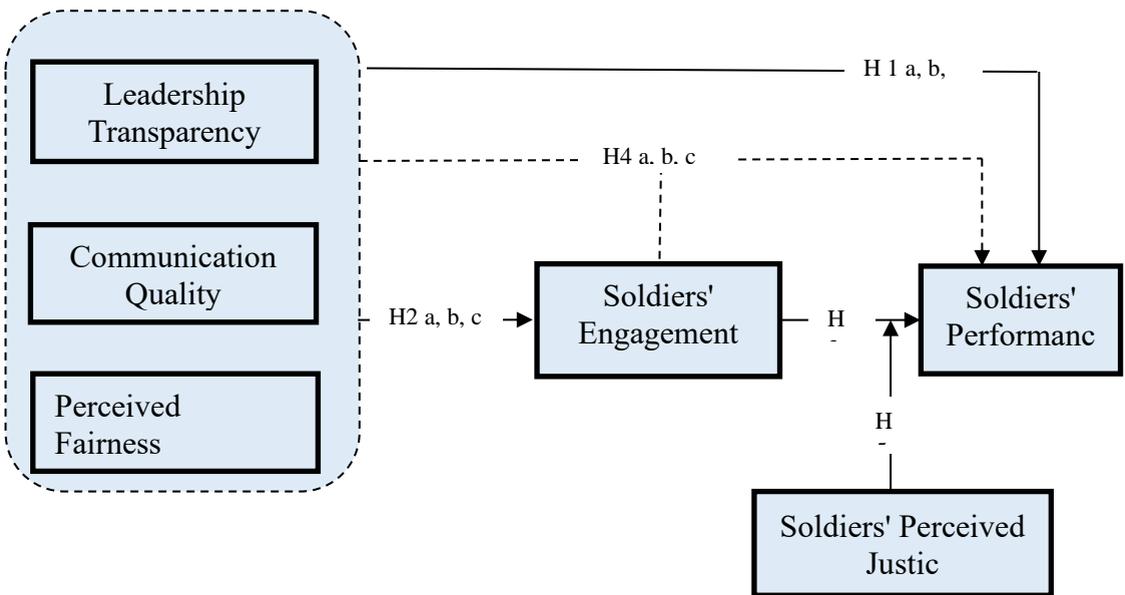


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research approach. A cross-sectional research design was adopted, enabling data collection at a single point in time to provide a snapshot of the relationships under scrutiny. The research engaged military personnel from diverse units within the Indonesian Army. Initially, 720 individuals were approached for participation in the study. A systematic recruitment process involving collaboration with military units and relevant authorities resulted in the willing participation of 565 individuals. Following meticulous data cleaning and quality checks, the final dataset comprised responses from 453 participants, resulting in an impressive response rate of 62.9%. The recruitment initiative commenced on 15th

November 2021, employing a systematic outreach strategy. Formal requests were made to military units and relevant authorities to secure permissions and cooperation for data collection. Subsequently, official invitations were extended to military personnel through established channels. Structured surveys and questionnaires served as the primary data collection tools, carefully designed and validated to assess crucial variables. Participants were asked to rate their perceptions and experiences using established scales and Likert-type items. This research adhered rigorously to ethical principles. Informed consent was diligently obtained from all participants, ensuring their voluntary involvement and guaranteeing the confidentiality of their responses. Furthermore, the study obtained ethical approval from the relevant institutional review board. The research initiative was initiated on 15th November 2021, with data collection, cleaning, and analysis spanning a six-month period. The final phase of data collection concluded on 15th April 2022.

3.1 Demographic characteristics

The demographic characteristics of the study participants at the time of data collection revealed a varied composition. Approximately 75.3% of the participants were male, with the remaining 24.7% being female. In terms of age, the majority, at about 58%, fell within the 25 to 34 years age group. Around 30% were aged between 35 and 44 years, while the remaining 12% were distributed across other age brackets. Regarding military rank, enlisted personnel accounted for approximately 40% of the participants, while officers made up about 35%, and the remaining 25% held non-commissioned officer positions. When considering years of military service, 25% had served for less than 5 years, 40% for 5 to 15 years, and 35% for more than 15 years. Furthermore, participants were affiliated with various military units, with roughly 20% belonging to infantry units, 15% to artillery units, 10% to logistics units, and the rest distributed among various other unit types.

3.2 Measures of the Study

Leadership transparency was assessed a 10-item questionnaire developed by [Tlou \(2022\)](#) to measure the extent to which military leaders are perceived as transparent in their decision-making and communication processes. Participants were asked to rate their leaders' transparency on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree." Communication quality was evaluated using 12 items by [Burt et al. \(2014\)](#) designed to gauge the effectiveness, clarity, and timeliness of communication within military units. Participants rated their perceptions of communication quality on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Poor" to "Excellent." Perceived fairness was measured using a 15-item instrument developed by [Hartmann and Slapničar \(2012\)](#) to assess soldiers' perceptions of fairness in resource allocation, treatment, and opportunities within the military organization. Participants rated their perceptions of fairness on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to

"Strongly Agree." Soldiers' engagement was assessed using 20-item scale developed by Shuck et al. (2017) to measure the emotional and cognitive commitment that soldiers invest in their military duties and responsibilities. Participants rated their level of engagement on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Not Engaged at All" to "Highly Engaged." Soldiers' performance was evaluated using a combination of objective performance metrics and supervisor ratings. Objective performance metrics included mission success rates, completion times, and accuracy. Supervisor ratings were based on established performance criteria, with supervisors providing ratings on a 5-point scale, ranging from "Poor" to "Outstanding." Perceived justice, as a moderator, was assessed using 6-item scale developed by Brown et al. (2020) to measure soldiers' perceptions of justice in various aspects of organizational processes. Participants rated their perceptions of justice on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," specifically in the context of how justice influences the relationship between soldiers' engagement and performance.

4. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 Reliability and Validity of the Measures

Table 1 presents an overview of the mean, standard deviation (STD), Average Variance Extracted (AVE), composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha (CA) for the study's constructs. The mean values offer insights into the central tendency of participants' responses, with higher means indicating more positive perceptions or a stronger presence of the respective construct under examination. AVE values above 0.5 are typically considered satisfactory (Hair et al., 2019). In our study, all constructs surpass this threshold, confirming robust convergent validity. CR values above 0.7 are widely accepted (Noor et al., 2022; Sarstedt et al., 2017). In our investigation, all constructs exhibit CR values exceeding 0.78, indicating a high level of internal consistency reliability. Furthermore, Cronbach's Alpha (CA) provides another measure of internal consistency reliability, with values above 0.7 indicating adequacy (Hair et al., 2019). In our research, all constructs demonstrate CA values exceeding 0.76, reinforcing the strong reliability of our measurements.

Table 1: Mean, STD, reliability, and validity of the study constructs

Construct	Mean	STD	AVE	CR	CA
Leadership Transparency	4.63	0.87	0.63	0.86	0.75
Communication Quality	4.85	0.60	0.62	0.80	0.82
Perceived Fairness	4.17	0.77	0.54	0.73	0.77
Soldiers' Engagement	4.06	0.69	0.55	0.75	0.83
Soldiers' Performance	4.37	0.76	0.57	0.82	0.86
Perceived Justice	4.57	0.64	0.59	0.79	0.85

4.2 VIF and Tolerance

We evaluated the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values to investigate the presence of multicollinearity among the constructs within the structural equation model (SEM) (Henseler et al., 2015; Noor et al., 2021). In Table 2, we present the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) and Tolerance values, which are essential indicators for assessing multicollinearity among the study's constructs. VIF values below 5 and Tolerance values above 0.2 are generally considered acceptable, indicating that multicollinearity is not a significant concern in the regression analysis. The VIF values range from 1.96 to 2.17, while the Tolerance values range from 0.56 to 0.78 for the study constructs. These values well satisfy the criteria for acceptable multicollinearity. Specifically, the constructs exhibit moderate to low levels of multicollinearity, suggesting that they can be included in the regression analysis without a substantial risk of inflated standard errors or unstable coefficient estimates. These findings reassure us that the study's regression models are unlikely to be adversely affected by multicollinearity issues, enhancing the reliability of our subsequent analyses and interpretations.

Table 2. VIF and Tolerance values

Construct	VIF	Tolerance
Leadership Transparency	2.11	0.60
Communication Quality	1.96	0.59
Perceived Fairness	2.04	0.67
Soldiers' Engagement	2.17	0.78
Soldiers' Performance	2.00	0.63
Perceived Justice	1.98	0.56

The study also assessed model fit indices to evaluate the goodness of fit of the structural equation model. The chi-square goodness-of-fit test assessed the difference between the observed and expected covariance matrices (Wang & Scheinbaum, 2018). The chi-square value was found to be 185.23, which was not significant ($p > 0.05$), indicating a good fit. Comparative Fit Index (CFI) measured the relative improvement in fit compared to a baseline model. The CFI value obtained was 0.95, which indicated a strong fit as it was very close to 1. Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), also known as the Non-Normed Fit Index (NNFI), value was 0.92, demonstrating a good fit according to the criterion of values above 0.90. Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) value was 0.07, which fell below the threshold of 0.08, indicating a good fit. Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR) value obtained was 0.06, well below the threshold of 0.08, further confirming a good fit. The reported fit indices demonstrated that the model had exhibited a strong fit, meeting the criteria for each

index. These fit indices provided confidence in the appropriateness of the structural equation model for our data, supporting the validity of our study's findings.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

Table 3 displays the relationships among the key constructs in the research study. Leadership transparency exhibits moderate positive correlations with communication quality (0.62), perceived fairness (0.49), and soldiers' engagement (0.38). This suggests that higher levels of leadership transparency are associated with better communication quality, greater perceived fairness, and increased engagement among soldiers. Communication quality demonstrates strong positive correlations with perceived fairness (0.68) and soldiers' engagement (0.54). This indicates that effective communication is linked to higher perceived fairness and increased engagement among soldiers. Perceived fairness has moderate positive correlations with soldiers' engagement (0.45) and soldiers' performance (0.51). Soldiers who perceive fairness are likelier to be engaged and exhibit better performance. Soldiers' engagement and soldiers' performance have a strong positive correlation (0.64). This suggests that engaged soldiers tend to perform better in their roles. Perceived justice, as a moderator, shows mild positive correlations with all other variables. It implies that the perception of justice may have some influence on the relationships among leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, soldiers' engagement, and soldiers' performance. In summary, the correlation analysis reveals several meaningful relationships among the variables.

Table 3. Correlation Analysis

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6
Leadership Transparency	1.00					
Communication Quality	0.62	1.00				
Perceived Fairness	0.49	0.68	1.00			
Soldiers' Engagement	0.38	0.54	0.45	1.00		
Soldiers' Performance	0.42	0.59	0.51	0.64	1.00	
Perceived Justice	0.31	0.42	0.37	0.29	0.36	1.00

4.4 Regression analysis

In the regression analysis presented in Table 4, we examined the relationships between various factors and their influence on soldiers' performance. The results provide valuable insights into the impact of these factors on the dependent variable, soldiers' performance. The analysis explored the

relationship between Leadership Transparency and Soldiers' Performance. The beta coefficient (β) was 0.211, with a t-value of 3.675 and a p-value of 0.003. These results indicate a significant positive relationship between Leadership Transparency and Soldiers' Performance, supporting H1a. Similarly, H1b investigated the association between Communication Quality and Soldiers' Performance. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.290, a t-value of 4.891, and a p-value of less than 0.001, supporting H1b. H1c explored the influence of Perceived Fairness on Soldiers' Performance. The analysis showed a significant positive relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.401, a t-value of 6.886, and a p-value of less than 0.001, aligning with H1c. Shifting the focus to Soldiers' Engagement, H2a examined the impact of Leadership Transparency. The results revealed a significant positive relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.237, a t-value of 4.211, and a p-value of 0.001, supporting H2a. H2b investigated the association between Communication Quality and Soldiers' Engagement. The analysis demonstrated a significant positive relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.380, a t-value of 5.987, and a p-value of less than 0.001, aligning with H2b. Similarly, H2c explored the influence of Perceived Fairness on Soldiers' Engagement. The findings revealed a significant positive relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.392, a t-value of 6.260, and a p-value of less than 0.001, supporting H2c. Additionally, H3 delved into the relationship between Soldiers' Engagement and Soldiers' Performance. The analysis indicated a significant positive relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.200, a t-value of 3.450, and a p-value of 0.005, emphasizing the positive impact of Soldiers' Engagement on Soldiers' Performance, aligning with H3. Moreover, Hypotheses H4a, H4b, and H4c investigated the mediation effects soldiers' engagement between various factors and Soldiers' Performance. All three hypotheses were supported, as they demonstrated significant relationships, underscoring the complex interplay of these factors in influencing Soldiers' Performance (see [Table 5](#)). Lastly, H5 examined the relationship between Perceived Justice, Soldiers' Engagement, and Soldiers' Performance. The analysis revealed a significant positive relationship, with a beta coefficient (β) of 0.184, a t-value of 2.756, and a p-value of 0.011, supporting H5. This intriguing finding underscores the pivotal role of perceived justice in the military context. It suggests that when soldiers perceive organizational decisions and processes as fair and just, their level of engagement tends to increase, subsequently exerting a positive influence on their overall performance. In essence, a fair and equitable environment, where soldiers perceive justice in matters of promotions, rewards, and resource allocation, appears to be conducive to heightened engagement and, consequently, enhanced performance.

Table 4. Regression Results

Hyp.	Hypothesis	Beta (β)	t-value	p-value	Support
H1a	Leadership Transparency → Soldiers' Performance	0.211	3.675	=0.003	Yes
H1b	Communication Quality → Soldiers' Performance	0.290	4.891	<0.001	Yes
H1c	Perceived Fairness → Soldiers' Performance	0.401	6.886	<0.001	Yes
H2a	Leadership Transparency → Soldiers' Engagement	0.237	4.211	=0.001	Yes
H2b	Communication Quality → Soldiers' Engagement	0.380	5.987	<0.001	Yes
H2c	Perceived Fairness → Soldiers' Engagement	0.392	6.260	<0.001	Yes
H3	Soldiers' Engagement → Soldiers' performance	0.200	3.450	=0.005	Yes
H4a	Leadership Transparency → Soldiers' Engagement → Soldiers' Performance	0.321	5.043	<0.001	Yes
H4b	Communication Quality → Soldiers' Engagement → Soldiers' Performance	0.198	3.021	=0.007	Yes
H4c	Perceived Fairness → Engagement → Soldiers' Performance	0.277	3.806	=0.003	Yes
H5	Perceived Engagemen → justice*Soldiers' Soldiers' Performance	0.184	2.756	=0.011	Yes

5. DISCUSSIONS

5.1 Discussion Section

Our study revealed a significant positive relationship between leadership transparency and soldiers' performance. This finding aligns with previous research emphasizing the pivotal role of transparent leadership in fostering trust, confidence, and a sense of direction among soldiers (Rehardiningtyas & Almubaroq, 2022; Sefidan et al., 2021). When leaders communicate openly and honestly, soldiers are more likely to understand their roles and missions, leading to improved performance. Effective communication emerged as another significant factor positively influencing soldiers' performance. This result is consistent with prior research highlighting that clear,

timely, and high-quality communication is essential for soldiers to be well-informed and motivated to excel in their responsibilities (Kumar & Sharma, 2022). Moreover, our study revealed that communication quality also plays a crucial role in soldiers' engagement. When communication is effective, soldiers not only receive necessary information but also feel valued and connected to their units. This sense of connection leads to higher engagement levels.

The study's findings also underscore the importance of perceived fairness in military units. Soldiers who perceive fairness in resource allocation, decision-making, and treatment within their units tend to be more motivated and committed, leading to enhanced performance (Allehbi, 2022). The study highlighted the positive relationship between leadership transparency and soldiers' engagement. Transparent leadership practices contribute to soldiers' higher engagement levels. When leaders provide clear guidance and information, soldiers are more likely to actively participate and feel connected to their roles (Hall & Deinla, 2021). Furthermore, the positive link between leadership transparency and soldiers' engagement has implications for performance. Engaged soldiers are more committed and motivated to excel in their duties, leading to improved performance outcomes (Gibson-Fall, 2021). Thus, leadership transparency indirectly influences soldiers' performance through its positive impact on engagement.

Results also revealed that effective communication also plays a crucial role in engaging soldiers in their duties. It is in line with previous studies suggesting that when communication is clear, informative, and fosters a sense of inclusion, soldiers are more likely to engage actively in their tasks (Finkelstein-Fox et al., 2021). This finding demonstrates the complex relationship between communication quality, engagement, and performance. It also reflects that effective communication not only promotes engagement but also sets the stage for better performance outcomes. Soldiers who receive clear and timely information are more likely to understand their roles and responsibilities, leading to improved performance. Additionally, soldiers who perceive fairness in their military environment are more likely to be more engaged in their duties. The study's findings emphasize that fairness goes beyond moral principles; it has a direct impact on soldiers' commitment and involvement.

Additionally, soldiers' engagement acts as a mediator, connecting leadership transparency, communication quality, and perceived fairness to soldiers' performance. This mediation effect highlights the intricate web of relationships within military organizations. Transparent leadership, effective communication, and perceived fairness not only impact soldiers' engagement but also collectively influence performance. Our findings also suggest that leadership transparency not only directly impacts soldiers' performance but also indirectly influences it through soldiers' engagement. Transparent leaders are more likely to inspire active participation and commitment among their troops, which, in turn, leads to enhanced performance

outcomes (Dawy et al., 2022). This underscores the importance of transparent leadership practices in military organizations, as they have both direct and indirect effects on performance. Additionally, perceived fairness indirectly affects soldiers' performance through their engagement. Fair treatment and decision-making processes contribute to a sense of belonging and commitment among soldiers, fostering higher levels of engagement. Consequently, these engaged soldiers exhibit better performance outcomes, reinforcing the notion that fairness is not only a moral imperative but also a strategic advantage for military organizations.

Finally the findings of the study revealed that when soldiers perceive justice within their military environment and are actively engaged, their overall performance is positively influenced. Perceived justice, in conjunction with engagement, contributes to better performance outcomes. This finding implies that justice is not an isolated concept but is intimately tied to engagement and performance. Soldiers who believe in the fairness of their environment are more motivated to engage actively in their duties, ultimately leading to improved performance.

5.2 Theoretical Implications

This study extends established social exchange theory to the unique context of the military. It demonstrates that this theory, which has been predominantly studied in civilian organizations, is equally applicable within military units. This expansion of theoretical frameworks enhances our understanding of how these principles operate in the military domain.. The identification of soldiers' engagement as a key mediator between leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, and performance has theoretical significance. It highlights the importance of considering soldiers' emotional and cognitive commitment as a central mechanism through which various organizational factors influence performance. This mediator-centric perspective contributes to the development of more nuanced theoretical models in both military and organizational psychology. Moreover, the study's exploration of trust in leadership as a critical element in the relationship between leadership transparency, soldiers' engagement, and performance enriches the theoretical understanding of trust dynamics. It emphasizes that trust is not just an outcome but an integral part of the process through which leadership practices influence soldiers' behavior and performance. The study illuminates the complex interplay of leadership transparency, communication quality, perceived fairness, engagement, and performance. It underscores the need for an integrated theoretical approach that considers the synergistic effects of these factors. This complexity challenges traditional linear models and encourages the development of more dynamic and interactive theoretical frameworks in military research. Finally, the theoretical insights gained from this study provide a foundation for developing targeted intervention strategies within military organizations. Armed with a deeper understanding of how leadership, communication, and fairness influence engagement

and performance, military leaders and policymakers can design evidence-based interventions to optimize soldier performance.

6. PRACTICAL CONTRIBUTION

The study underscores the critical role of leadership transparency in influencing soldiers' engagement and performance. Military organizations should prioritize leadership development programs that equip leaders with the skills and knowledge to communicate transparently, set clear expectations, and provide regular feedback. Training should focus on building trust, as transparent leaders are more likely to inspire confidence and commitment among their troops. Effective communication is a linchpin of soldiers' engagement and performance. Military organizations should invest in communication training that equips leaders and personnel with the ability to convey information clearly, concisely, and in a timely manner. Utilizing various communication channels, including digital platforms and face-to-face interactions, can help ensure that messages reach all soldiers effectively. The study also highlights the significance of perceived fairness in influencing engagement and performance. Military organizations should prioritize fairness in resource allocation, promotions, and decision-making processes. Implementing transparent and fair procedures, along with clear communication of these processes, can contribute to a culture of fairness within the organization. Moreover, recognizing the pivotal role of engagement, military leaders should actively encourage soldiers to participate in decision-making processes, offer opportunities for skill development, and create a sense of belonging within units. Engagement can be further promoted through team-building exercises, mentorship programs, and initiatives that enhance soldiers' connection to their roles and colleagues. Military organizations should consider holistic training programs that integrate leadership development, communication skills, and fairness awareness into their curricula. Such programs should focus not only on technical and tactical skills but also on the interpersonal and leadership competencies necessary for effective military service. Finally, trust in leadership emerged as a crucial factor in the study. Military organizations should prioritize trust-building initiatives, emphasizing integrity, transparency, and consistency in leadership practices. Encouraging open communication channels for soldiers to voice concerns and feedback can contribute to trust development.

7. LIMITATION AND FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

While this study examined key factors influencing soldiers' performance, there may be additional variables and contextual factors that were not considered. Future research could explore the role of variables such as team dynamics, leadership styles, and external stressors in shaping soldiers' engagement and performance. This study adopted a cross-sectional design, which captures a snapshot of relationships at a single point in time. Future research could employ longitudinal designs to explore how the dynamics of

leadership transparency, communication quality, fairness, engagement, and performance evolve over time. This study primarily examined direct relationships and mediation effects but did not extensively explore potential moderator variables. Future research could investigate the moderating influence of variables like rank, experience, and unit type on the relationships studied to uncover nuanced insights. Moreover, it is suggested for future researchers to investigate how cultural differences influence the relationships between leadership transparency, communication quality, fairness, engagement, and performance within military organizations. Comparative studies across different cultural contexts can provide valuable insights into the universality or context-specific nature of these relationships. Finally, with the increasing integration of technology in military operations, future research can delve into how technological advancements, such as augmented reality, artificial intelligence, and advanced communication systems, impact soldiers' performance. Investigate how soldiers' engagement, influenced by their interaction with technology, affects their ability to carry out tasks, make decisions, and adapt to evolving battlefield environments. This research can provide insights into optimizing technology interfaces and training programs to enhance soldier performance in high-tech military settings.

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