

Psychological Experiences Of Indonesian Border Soldiers In Carrying Out Military Duties: A Case Study

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Abstract

Background: Stress in the military is caused by being separated from family for a long time, moving places of work, risk of death, and disability. Traumatic impact on soldiers can be overcome by increasing adaptive coping. Soldiers with adaptive coping feel they have found a family and have high self-esteem.

Objective: This study aims to provide an overview of the psychological condition of soldiers who carry out their duties at the border through the perspective of army members.

Method: This type of qualitative research with case study method. The number of participants is three soldiers on duty at the border. The data collection method was carried out by semi-structured interviews and carried out in-depth interviews. The analysis uses the Colaizzi approach through 7 steps to forming a theme describing the phenomenon. The data validity test was carried out with the stages of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability.

Results: The findings in this study describe the psychological conditions experienced by border soldiers by generating three themes and two categories. The resulting theme provides a positive psychological picture of feeling happy to get the assignment experience, feeling ready to carry out the task. In contrast, the harmful psychological dilemma of assignment and family consists of 2 categories: the dilemma of being a soldier and family member and feeling heavy parting from family.

Conclusion: The psychology of soldiers serving at the border is critical to maintaining a prosperous condition. Members can improve adaptive coping of the army to suppress negative thoughts, such as providing support from families by maintaining communication with each other and developing nursing interventions such as counseling facilities. Counseling activities focus on overcoming problems and provide information and education activities to maintain physical and psychological health.

Keyword: Psychological, border soldiers, military duty

Introduction

Stress in the military environment has unique characteristics. Several studies have identified stress in soldiers related to stressors from the work environment due to cultural deployment (Amin Sarabandi, Hasan Hazarati, 2012; Harms, Krasikova, Vanhove, Herian, & Lester, 2013; Kok, Herrell, Thomas, & Hoge, 2012; Mota et al., 2012). The majority of members of the American military sent to conflict areas experience moderate to high levels of stress. Stress is also related to interpersonal relationships between co-workers (Amin Sarabandi, Hasan Hazarati, 2012). In addition, other studies have shown that border soldiers are prone to experiencing higher stress than soldiers in military units (Mota et al., 2012).

Several previous studies identified stressors that increase stress in soldiers (Bell et al., 2014). Stressors experienced by soldiers such as separation from family for an extended time, transfer of assignment, risk of death and disability, exposure to chemicals are some of the factors that affect stress on soldiers (Al-amri & Al-amri, 2013; Bell et al., 2014; Burrell, Adams, Durand, & Castro, 2015; Osborne, Gage, & Rolbiecki, 2012). In addition, leadership factors, pressure from peers and leaders, and injury or death of unit members (Bryan et al., 2015; Englert, Hunter, & Sweeney, 2003; Kok et al., 2012). Work stress in the military environment can also be caused by a work rhythm of 19 hours per shift, and 75% of soldiers sometimes have to work 24 hours a day without compensation (Al-amri & Al-amri, 2013; Ferrand et al., 2012). ; Simmons & Yoder, 2013). Female soldiers report a risk of sexual harassment that can leave traumatic lives (Mota et al., 2012).

Traumatic impacts on members of the army can be overcome by increasing positive affect in order to be able to perform adaptive coping. Soldiers who can carry out adaptive coping can suppress negative feelings to successfully carry out military missions (Chaturvedula & Joseph, 2007). Female soldiers in the Canadian Forces, who are a minority group and have good coping skills, can consider the base as their own home and their colleagues in the military environment as a family (Mota, Medved, Hiebert-Murphy, Whitney, & Sareen, 2018; Mota et al., 2012). Soldiers with good coping will also have a low level of depression (Cesur R Tekin E., 2011). Indonesian soldiers who have good coping will feel life is more meaningful, have high self-esteem, and adjust to retirement (Desiningrum, 2012; Safira, Prativhi, & Cahya S, 2016). Soldiers with good coping, cognitive restructuring, and religious values will have satisfaction in life. Meanwhile, coping efforts associated with personality are predictors of improving psychological health (Skomorovsky & Sudom, 2011).

Adaptive coping conditions in soldiers can be inversely proportional when soldiers cannot achieve welfare conditions, so they have maladaptive behavior. Maladaptive behavior can be experienced by soldiers when carrying out military operations, which are indicated in the light to heavy category. Maladaptive behavior with mild categories can be felt by female soldiers when sent to the battlefield by showing smoking behavior, consuming alcohol, moderate insomnia, to eating disorders (bulimia) (Chu, Stanley, Hom, Lim, & Joiner, 2017; Osborne et al., 2012). Research in several countries confirms worrying about the negative behavior exhibited by soldiers on duty. Such as alcohol abuse as much as 3.13% to 48%. Symptoms of negative behavior due to work stress were also experienced by American soldiers as much as 15% reported a decrease in performance at work by limiting abilities at work, 13% were less careful, causing leaders to become worried (Fear et al., 2010; Harms et al., 2013).

Meanwhile, the Indonesian soldiers are characterized by difficulty sleeping, aggressive behavior, irritability, often remembering traumatic experiences. Indonesian soldiers who cannot establish good relations between personnel can behave negatively, such as committing violence and becoming heavy smokers (47.8%) (Aisyah, Musthofa, & Indraswari, 2017). Mild psychological

problems in soldiers who do not get immediate treatment will become more severe, such as suicide attempts. Several studies have reported that military suicide attempts occurred after serving a long deployment period in conflict areas (Nock et al., 2014; Shelef et al., 2015; Ursano et al., 2017, 2015, 2016).

Research on soldiers with psychological problems due to cultural deployment in the military environment is mainly done quantitatively. Several studies explain that soldiers experience psychological problems such as stress to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) after being sent to conflict areas (Harbertson et al., 2013; Mota et al., 2012). In contrast, research conducted on soldiers in border areas with a quantitative approach discusses the factors that cause work stress (Sharma, 2015). Several studies on Indonesian soldiers related to work stress have also been carried out quantitatively (Amiruddin & Ambarini, 2014; Daniaputri & Abidin, 2013; Faiqoh, Hartanti, & Ellyke, 2018; Resdasari, Nurtjahjanti, Fauziah, & Kustanti, 2016).

Qualitative research approaches to Indonesian soldiers are still predominantly carried out in the family environment, but the research that discusses psychological problems in border soldiers has been carried out but is still limited (Damayanti, Ratnawati, & Fevriasanty, 2016; Putri & Daliman, 2018). Research with a qualitative approach can help provide an overview of the meaning of life soldiers feel when carrying out their duties at the border. Efforts to explore the meaning of life can help increase the role of nurses in providing nursing services.

The role of nurses in improving services can be done by secondary prevention efforts such as screening. Screening is essential to get accurate data related to problems around soldiers on the battlefield (Pinder, Fear, Wessely, Reid, & Greenberg, 2010). Screening for psychological problems in military soldiers is related to the nurse's duties as case managers, so the screening results become the basis for providing nursing interventions (Potter, Perry, Stockert, & Hall, 2013).

The results of qualitative research data are needed as primary data for the development of nursing interventions so that a qualitative approach with a case study method related to psychological experiences in soldiers at the border can help develop nursing innovations, especially as an effort to increase adaptive coping for soldiers serving at the border.

Purpose

This study aims to provide an overview of the psychological condition of soldiers who carry out their duties at the border through the perspective of army members.

Method

The research design uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. Case studies focus on discussing cases at a time, with a special place. Case studies will describe similar cases (Lauer, 1994). This case study will discuss the psychological condition of soldiers on the Indonesian border who have survived in minimal conditions. The inclusion criteria in this case study are as follows: 1. Representatives of the military population serving at the Indonesian border, 2. Participants can communicate effectively, 3. Willing to be an informant, 4. Healthy condition, no disease complications, 5. Age 25 up to 40 years.

The data collection method used is the semi-structured interview. A semi-structured interview is a method of collecting data verbally which is carried out as a conversation that focuses on exploring perceptions or experiences by compiling questions with open to closed types of questions by allowing questions to develop so that it is expected to bring up a theme (Blandford, 2013;

Showkat, 2013). Nayeem & Parveen, 2017). Data will be collected through interviews through interview techniques, observation, and audio recordings or voice recorders.

The instrument used as a guide in the interview is a development of the psychological well-being theory, consisting of 13 questions. Question items are arranged according to specific objectives related to the psychological condition of soldiers while carrying out their duties. The instrument used has been tested by an expert before the data collection process.

Data analysis was carried out using Colaizzi, with the initial step of making transcripts, coding to help maintain the confidentiality of participant data. Coding was also carried out to make it easier for researchers to review participants' experiences. The analysis process will be continued by extracting the transcript by looking for statements that significantly relate to the phenomenon. Meanings that have been obtained significantly will be reported and will be sorted to make categories that will form sub-themes and themes. The themes found will be described to form the structure of the phenomenon under study. The last step of the data analysis process is to validate the findings by comparing the results of the researchers' descriptions (Abalos, Rivera, Locsin, & Schoenhofer, 2016; Shosha, 2012).

Testing the validity of the data is carried out through stages such as credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability. Credibility, the trustworthiness of the data, can be done by checking or member checking techniques. Checks are carried out directly to participants and provide an opportunity to read carefully and make justifications or blame if the data does not match. Dependability is related to the consistency of the data obtained. The data is processed in a structured manner so that the reader can interpret it according to the conditions experienced by the participants. Confirmability relates to aspects of data objectivity. The objectivity of the data is done by using a track record or using field notes that can provide an overview of the condition of the participants during the interview. Transferability is related to the generalization aspect by maintaining the purity of the data. Transferability can provide an overview of data results used in the same location conditions or settings with different periods (Polit & Beck, 2012; Shosha, 2012).

Results

Research context

The case study takes place in a border area of Indonesia. The border area used in this study is the border area of Papua and Papua New Guinea. The border areas in Papua can be reached by land route with a reasonably vast territorial terrain and still swamps and forests. In the border area of Papua, the military post is very close to community housing and markets. The Papua border area is divided into several posts from Moso to the Also border. The area is included in the Jayapura to Keerom area with 16 posts. The members of the army who are in the boarding house have a function as a reserve army when there are soldiers at the posts that need to be held rolling. The border army has to maintain the sovereignty of the country's territorial borders or maintain stakes, secure immigrants, certain environmental conditions when people visit, carry out territorial duties and functions, safeguard in cases of illegal logging, and safeguard state sovereignty from separatist threats.

In health services, it is carried out by a health team which is spread out in the Kotis and Postal areas in the interior. The health team consists of doctors and nurses. Doctors are stationed in the Kotis, while nurses are assigned to guard posts. Military nurses have primary nursing education and sometimes receive non-formal education such as nurse training for three months. Nursing services

are provided with a focus on overcoming physical problems, while mental health services that specifically deal with psychological problems cannot be carried out. The limitations of nursing facilities and personnel, causing soldiers with psychological problems to try to overcome the problem by increasing their respective coping so as not to engage in negative behavior.

1st The participant is 28 years old from Purworejo and has worked for 11 years. 1st Participant is married and has two children. 1st, The Participant has only participated in securing the Indonesian border once. 1st Participant is in charge of the logistics section, which is tasked with distributing the clothing and food needs of the task force members. When they first received the warrant, the 1st Participant was very excited because he passed the border security selection. At the time of assignment, 1st Participant left a wife who was six months pregnant and a child who was 11 months old. When deciding to leave, the 1st Participant's feelings were burdensome, but because the assignment was pride and honor for the soldiers, the 1st Participant decided to leave. Another thing that made the 1st Participant ready to depart was the obligation of soldiers to obey the leadership's orders, not to fight in terms of military insubordination. However, on the other hand, the 1st Participant was afraid that his child would not recognize him and called him uncle. 1st sometimes feel not a good father.

2nd Participants are 28 years old from Kebumen and have worked within the Indonesian National Army – the Army. For five years. 2nd Participant is married, and his wife is seven months pregnant. P2 was sent for the first time on assignment at the border. The 2nd Participant served in the practical guard section and was placed at the Kotis post in the Jayapura area and the LAT KES TATANDU field. 2nd Participants are health workers who serve as nurses but have never attended formal education but have had health training for three months. The 2nd Participant lives with his mother, who is sick due to surgery, and his father also recently died, so the 2nd Participant feels sad that he has to leave his mother. 2nd, Participants feel the burden when they have to leave their wife, who is pregnant at the age of 7 months and is waiting for the child's birth. 2nd, Participants always feel anxious because their families are also worried when they hear news about Papua.

3rd Participants aged 30 years from Klaten with ten years of service. 3rd Participants have experience with two assignments in border areas. 3rd Participant is currently married with two children. Currently, the position of the 3rd Participant is TAMBAK SO or FANTASMA shooter of automatic weapons. While carrying out their duties, the 3rd Participant was worried when he heard that he would be assigned to Papua because it is a vulnerable area. 3rd Participants also feel that it is hard and sad to leave their family, but they must continue to do it because it is an obligation to be happy even though it is hard. 3rd Participants had doubts because the children were still small and every time their wife gave birth they could not accompany them. 3rd Participants sometimes feel guilty that they cannot be good fathers.

The results of data analysis using the Colaizzi technique obtained three themes and two categories that we can describe psychological problems during the assignment. The themes obtained are related to psychological conditions at high scores and low-value categories.

Feel good to get assignment experience

Feeling happy to get the experience of an assignment is the feeling of soldiers when they are trusted to carry out military duties that can be used as life experiences, where not all members of the Army have the opportunity to participate because they must be able to pass a strict selection.

The experience of being assigned to the Army is a matter of pride and honor for carrying out the task of securing the country. The assignment experience is the result of the leadership's assessment

of soldiers' performance during their service in the unit. The experience of being assigned to soldiers is a blessing in itself because apart from getting special allowances, assignments can provide valuable experience and increase self-confidence when joining elite troops in the Army. Assignments also make soldiers feel the role of real soldiers, and not all soldiers can feel sent on assignment. Soldiers who leave for assignments also go through a reasonably strict selection, so they feel proud when joining the assignment. This was revealed by several participants based on the results of interviews as follows:

"My pride is that when I describe again 800 personnel, only 400 personnel are taken, my name is included. It was also an amazing experience for me, especially since it was my first time experiencing an assignment" (1ST Participant)

"First of all, I am happy because I am part of the task force, so I am curious to feel what the ideal task is like here" (2nd Participant)

"It's nice to get the experience, just keep feeling proud, we get the state duty" (3rd Participant)

The dilemma of assignment and family

The dilemma of assignment and family is a condition that is often faced when members of the Army participate in assignments, where a soldier will always be faced with obligations as a soldier and the responsibility of carrying out his role in the family and find it difficult to be separated from his family. The feeling of a dilemma is often a burden on the mind when soldiers have to decide to participate in their duties or have to live with their families. Conditions are felt to be more difficult when wives and parents find it challenging to provide support, so members of the Army must provide understanding and reinforcement to be enthusiastic about carrying out their duties. The dilemma conditions experienced by soldiers serving at the border can be described in two categories: the dilemma of being soldiers and family members and feeling heavy parting with their families.

The dilemma as soldiers and family members

The condition of the dilemma as a soldier and family member is a condition that makes soldiers under challenging conditions because they are faced with the role of soldiers who must be loyal to the orders of the leader as well as roles as family members who must be responsible for protecting all family members. In these conditions, soldiers will feel guilty for not witnessing important moments in the family. The moments that put the soldiers under challenging choices when the wife gave birth was never accompanied, the child was born unable to give natural affection, was unable to know the growth and development of the children, the parents were sick or even in a state of mourning. The condition of the dilemma can be illustrated from the excerpts from interviews with several members of the Army as follows:

"Stories from seniors, if we are assigned, we will go home later, the children will call us not papa but uncle, is this true or not. But yes, yesterday, I came home for a while, came home to Cakra, my child was also carrying, crying, but we often accompanied him, we often invited him to play, that's why he understood that I was his parent. My dilemma for my second child is not to go home and not accept me anymore..." (1st participant)

"I find it difficult when my parents, who may be a bit heavy when I work here, because my parents live here. After we were about to leave, the father wasn't there. After that, before the father wasn't there, the mother also had leg surgery, the parents had to live alone, but we also thought

about it yesterday, I was confused too, after that I just got married and my wife is pregnant , but the name of the Army must still go..." (2nd Participant)

"I am happy as a soldier, the main task is to gain experience, if I as the head of the family think differently, it's a bit heavy. If I personally stated that I was not too enthusiastic, I was not too happy because there was also a family at home. But if you're in the military, you're proud, if you're the head of a family, it's different, so sometimes it's difficult under these conditions" (3rd Participant)

Feels heavy parting with family

Feeling heavy parting from family is a feeling that is always felt by soldiers serving at the border because they have to leave their families. Soldiers who experience assignments will feel sad because they leave their parents, wife, and children. Sadness is felt when you just got married, your wife is pregnant, or when your parents are sick. A heavy feeling is also felt considering the Papua region is a conflict-prone area, so it can cause feelings of anxiety that can add to the family's mind. The heavy feeling is also felt when you leave small children with only their mother at home alone. Excerpts from interviews from several participants describing the condition of feeling heavy are as follows:

"Personally, it's really hard for me to leave because my wife is less than three months pregnant to give birth, and I can't accompany her" (1st Participant)

"I feel sad because it's hard to leave my family while pregnant, even though she doesn't have a father and mother anymore, both of them are alone, so it's hard to separate from my mother and wife who are pregnant" (2nd Participant)

"It's hard, if I'm the second child, because when I was in Kalimantan my wife was pregnant, my wife gave birth and I couldn't take care of her. Then the children are still small, while at home alone with their mother, so there is a feeling of pity for the children alone with their mother" (3rd Participant)

Feeling ready to do the job.

Feeling ready to carry out their duties is a feeling that arises when they think that assignments do not occur every year, and soldiers also have a priority to carry out orders from the leadership, so they are sincere to carry out task orders. Soldiers have a high spirit of patriotism, so from the start of education, they always get the doctrine ready to be placed anywhere, in any condition and situation. Soldiers also have the principle of placing duties first above personal and family interests. The Army also does not have bargaining power when faced with securing the country's duties and responsibilities. Soldiers also always position themselves as soldiers when they leave for work and enthusiastically and sincerely carry out all the commander's orders. The following are excerpts from interviews with several participants that can explain these conditions:

"We're back to being loyal earlier, we can't refute orders before we do it first. Finally, taking priority up, priority to the leadership command to leave ok, ready to go, let's get ready to go" (1ST Participant)

"Personally, I want to go, if I don't think about it now, when will it be because this doesn't have this task every year. If every year there is an assignment, maybe we can do this, so be ready, stay enthusiastic and determined to go" (2nd Participant)

"Still we carry out our duties sincerely because it is an order and it is our job, which we live"(3rd Participant)

Discussion

The findings in this study revealed that the psychological experience of soldiers during their duties at the border was not only positive but also when they were at a low or negative point. In this study, participants perceived positive psychology such as feeling happy to get task experience, feeling ready to carry out tasks, while negative psychological feelings felt assignment and family dilemmas.

Positive psychology feels happy to get the assignment experience described by participants as pride and happiness that comes from within. Feelings of happiness indicate a quality of life that has a component of satisfaction and a pleasant experience character. Happiness can also be life satisfaction or subjective well-being (Veenhoven, 2012). Happiness is an expression that overshadows theories of well-being and is the basic theory between psychology and emotion. Individuals feel different happiness because it is influenced by biological elements such as genetic influences that can affect feelings of well-being; personality is an individual character that can influence behavior and emotions and the influence of the social environment such as events in life (Kaczmarek, 2017). The expression of happiness of a soldier who participates in an assignment at the border is an event that is very much dreamed of because it provides a different experience and adds to his achievements in military organizations. This is in line with the results of research that soldiers sent to carry out assignments have positive and negative impacts on members of the Army. One that shows a positive psychological impact is the career development of soldiers (Newby, Ursano, Fan, Shigemura, & Tucker-Harris, 2005).

The feeling of happiness of the members of the Army, which is described as pride because they have the opportunity to protect the sovereignty of the country, is not entirely accepted with joy. Members of the Army, when carrying out duties at the border, sometimes feel a dilemma when faced with state duties and responsibilities in the family. Soldiers who are sent to work will always decide to carry out their obligations as military officers so that members of the Army must accept the consequences of not having much time to gather with their families (Baarle, Bosch, Widdershoven, Verweij, & Molewijk, 2015). Dilemma conditions will also be experienced by members of the Army when they are in challenging conditions and decide to make choices to survive and avoid psychological problems during military operations (M.Thompson, H.Thompson, & D.Adams, 2008).

Soldiers who feel the psychological burden of thinking about assignment and family dilemmas can experience mental disorders. The psychological burden is felt when you have to part with your family. Soldiers will find it hard to be separated from their families and live in a new environment. Soldiers can eliminate negative feelings by increasing positive feelings by conducting self-evaluations and controlling mood. The ability to evaluate and control mood can impact self-control efforts so that soldiers avoid immoral actions or violating military rules (Bastian et al., 2013). Soldiers serving at the border perceive that other efforts can be made to maintain a commitment to always communicate with families. This is in line with efforts to overcome obstacles often carried out by soldiers who are sent to conflict and vulnerable areas, namely by always maintaining open communication with families (Wilson, Gettings, Hall, & Pastor, 2015).

Members of the Army perceive feeling ready to carry out the assignment. This is in line with the attitude of masculinity that has been instilled in the members of the Army. The attitude of

masculinity in soldiers is the effect of positive feelings or psychological well-being to prepare soldiers to carry out their assignments (Alfred, Hammer, & Good, 2014). Soldiers with adaptive coping and ready to serve at the border will be victorious in carrying out the tasks assigned by the leadership (Chaturvedula & Joseph, 2007). The ability to maintain adaptive coping to achieve psychological well-being conditions for members of the Army serving at the border is strongly influenced by personality factors. Soldiers with extroverted personalities will eliminate feelings that can reduce psychological well-being. Meanwhile, soldiers who have personality neuroticism will feel unable to develop their abilities, so they feel ambiguous and bored (Barakat & Othman, 2015). Soldiers perceive this as saturated when they have to carry out the same activities for an extended period.

Soldiers' challenges at the border can be tackled when soldiers get support from friends and family. Providing support can be done by providing education and counseling service programs. With this program, members of the Army and their families can overcome all challenges and obstacles during their assignment (Canada, The, Front, & Strength, n.d.). Such conditions can illustrate the importance of the role of health workers, especially nurses, to carry out counseling activities. Counseling activities can positively impact members of the Army to maintain psychological well-being.

Conclusion

The psychology of soldiers serving at the border is critical to maintaining a prosperous condition. The psychological condition of soldiers at the border can be negative or positive. Members can increase adaptive coping of the Army to suppress negative thoughts, thereby increasing positive thinking. The study results illustrate that members of the Army will feel psychologically in a low or negative condition when faced with choices of duties and responsibilities as family members. Soldiers also described feelings of sadness when separated from their families. Army members need family support by maintaining communication with each other. Another effort that health workers can make is to develop nursing interventions such as counseling facilities. Counseling activities focus not only on overcoming the problems faced by members of the Army but also on providing information and education in maintaining physical and psychological health.

Implication

The study results can be used as material to develop nursing interventions related to efforts to improve adaptive coping through counseling therapy. The study results can also be applied to nursing students in providing community nursing care related to improving occupational health and family welfare in the military environment. The study results can also be used as the basis for further research to explore the resilience of soldiers in carrying out their duties and efforts to maintain family welfare while on duty.

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