

RESILIENCE OF ARMY SOLDIERS WHO ARE CARRYING OUT OPERATIONAL TASKS IN THE PAPUA REGION

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Abstract

As an Indonesian army, carrying out operational duties in Papua will experience obstacles from internal and external sources, making the operational duties more challenging. By having good resilience, Indonesian armies carrying out operational tasks in Papua can overcome obstacles and meet the expectations of the leadership and the soldiers. Resilience is an individual's ability to respond to adversity or trauma in healthy and productive ways. This study aims to explore and understand the resilience abilities of the Indonesian army, which is carrying out operational tasks in the Papua. The research was conducted using a qualitative approach with a generic qualitative design. Participants consisted of 3 Army soldiers with different ranks on duty in Papua. Data collection was conducted through online semi-structured interviews. The results showed that the factors that influence soldiers' resilience include: 1) External support; 2) Concerns for the safety of self and others; 3) Efforts to overcome obstacles; 4) Duties and responsibilities; 5) Obstacles encountered; and 6) Closeness between personnel. In conclusion, soldiers can survive and adapt to various difficulties in Papua due to external support and efforts made in carrying out duties and responsibilities.

Keywords: Resilience; Indonesian Army; Papua

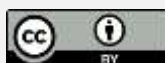
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INTRODUCTION

Geographically separated from Java, Papua is one of the easternmost provinces in Indonesia and is home to a large diversity of indigenous tribes (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2021). The existence of a great deal of cultural diversity and strong tribal influence has led to prolonged social conflict. Papua's vast and difficult-to-navigate geographical conditions also affect security stability in Papua. In addition, Papua's border areas are relatively vulnerable to illegal border crossings, smuggling of goods and people, theft of natural resources, smuggling of alcoholic beverages and illegal drugs, and the emergence of

activities of the Armed Criminal Group (KKB) or Papuan Terrorist Separatist Group (KSTP) (Sari & Hartini, 2021). Historically, Papua was a Dutch colony before becoming part of the Republic of Indonesia in 1969 (Chauvel, 2020). Despite officially being part of Indonesia, a number of separatist groups in Papua want independence from Indonesia (Mietzner, 2019). After the fall of the Soeharto regime and followed by Papua's special autonomy, security conditions had improved but then heated up again, marked by armed separatist actions and clashes with security forces, including the TNI-Polri.

The government, through the Coordinating Minister for Political and Security Affairs, has issued a statement designating the Free Papua Organization (OPM) as a terrorist organization. The government has officially designated the Free Papua Organization (OPM) as a terrorist organization. The decision refers to Law No. 5/2018 on the Eradication of the Crime of Terrorism. Not only the OPM, terrorist status also applies to those who are members of it and supporters of the organization. Terrorists are individuals or organizations that commit massive acts of violence (Nafa Afrillia & Ferry Edward, 2023). (Grotberg, 1997) states that terrorism and violence are some of the experiences of difficulties that come from environments outside the family. So as to maintain security stability in Papua from armed groups, a joint TNI/Polri Operations Task Force was formed from various regions to strengthen existing TNI/Polri units in Papua. This task force served for one year or more and will be continued by the next task force.

The task of operations in conflict areas is a challenge as well as a source of pride for TNI soldiers who have the trust to carry it out. One of the assignments that has a high level of vulnerability is the assignment of securing vulnerable areas in Papua. Based on information obtained from the Operations Planner Junior Helper Officer, the assignment that caused the most personnel casualties was the assignment in Papua; recorded in 2023, as many as 15 soldiers died. This statement shows that soldiers serving in Papua live side by side with conditions that risk threatening their safety. This condition causes psychological pressure on the soldiers on duty, such as the emergence of fear, feeling threatened, and great concern for their safety. TNI soldiers carrying out operational duties in Papua may experience excessive psychological pressure, leading to the creation of stressors that can impact their mental or psychological health (Sari & Hartini, 2021).

Based on further interviews, soldiers assigned to operations also face other challenges related to their relationships with family members. Soldiers must leave their pregnant wives or young children to carry out operational duties. The limited signal conditions mean that soldiers do not have the opportunity to communicate freely with their children, wives, and other family members. This limitation requires soldiers to endure longing for family members and have less opportunity to exchange stories and complaints with loved ones. These conditions put further psychological pressure on the service members.

Therefore, assignment to conflict-prone areas leads to the emergence of emotional problems in each member of the Army. To deal with this condition, individuals need to have the capacity to make positive adaptations when experiencing stressful circumstances (Adler & Saboe, 2017). The capacity of individuals to be able to face and reduce the effects of stress well can arise with the presence of psychological resilience (Hou et al., 2017). "Resilience is the human capacity to deal with, overcome, learn from, or even be transformed by the inevitable adversities of life" (Grotberg, 2003, p. 1). Resilience is the human capacity to deal with, overcome, learn from, or even be transformed by the inevitable adversities of life (Grotberg, 2003).

Resilience is defined as an individual's capacity to recover from life difficulties and traumatic events (Wu et al., 2013). According to (Gatt et al., 2020), resilience is the capacity of individuals to rise from adversity, conflict, confusion, and failure and the ability to make positive changes. (Bonanno et al., 2011) describe resilience as the ability of normal adults who are faced with isolated and potentially highly disruptive events, such as the death of a loved one or a violent or life-threatening situation, to maintain relatively stable and healthy psychological and physical functioning. According to (Niaz, 2006), resilience can be seen in several ways, namely: the ability of individuals to bounce back from life's pressures, learn, and look for positive things in their environment to help them achieve success in the process of adapting and developing all their abilities, despite being in a depressed living condition, either externally or internally.

Several studies have shown that high resilience plays an important role in helping soldiers cope with tough tasks and keep their mental health in top shape (Johnson et al., 2010; Meadows et al., 2016), is correlated with better task performance (J. Lee et al., 2019), motivation and job satisfaction, and good psychological well-being (Pidgeon et al., 2014). High resilience is positively correlated with a healthier lifestyle and good physical performance (S. Y. Lee et al., 2020), an optimistic attitude and high mental well-being (Mayordomo et al., 2021), and good mental health (Xu et al., 2020). At work, individuals with high resilience show better performance (Walpita & Arambepola, 2020). Meanwhile, low resilience is associated with easy self-blame and high anxiety and depression (Liesto et al., 2020).

The resilience factors, according to (Grotberg, 1997), are simply that I have, I am, and I can. The I have factor is an external support that encourages a person's resilience. This external support can come from family, friends, brothers, or relatives who are trustworthy and supportive, or role models who can be role models, knowing the limits of one's abilities and the availability of health and safety facilities. The I am factor is an inner strength that develops over time and sustains it in the face of adversity. These strengths include the ability to build relationships with others, a calm disposition, the ability to plan for the future, respect for oneself and others, the ability to empathize with and care for others, self-confidence, and optimism. The I can factor is an interpersonal skill in problem solving when facing difficulties. These skills include the ability to find new ideas, the ability to complete tasks to completion, having a sense of humor to reduce tension, and being able to express feelings when communicating with others.

Resilience is needed for someone to be able to live life well, be able to overcome every problem faced, and prevent someone from experiencing psychological problems (Shi et al., 2016). Resilience can also encourage someone to succeed in life, prevent a decrease in physical and psychological health, and shape individuals to become stronger individuals (Damayanti, 2019). In general, resilience is characterized by a number of characteristics, including the ability to deal with adversity, resilience in dealing with stress, or rising from the trauma experienced (Hendriani, 2022). Based on the explanation above, carrying out operational tasks in Papua is a task that poses a high level of threat, difficulty, and danger for Army soldiers. Researchers are interested in knowing and understanding further the resilience of TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in Papua so that they survive in a stressful condition.

RESEARCH METHOD

Participant

The researchers conducted this study on TNI AD soldiers currently carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region. The participants in this study were three people, consisting of one officer, one non-commissioned officer, and one enlisted man. The three participants are currently in Papua to carry out Operation Duty from May 2023 to May 2024, or even more. The different rank groups of each participant will help this research gain a more comprehensive and diverse perspective.

Table 1. Demographic Identity of Participants

Self-Identify	Participant 1 (P1)	Participant 2 (P2)	Participant 3 (P3)
Nama/Inisial	MZ	N	RW
Age	28 years	43 tahun	27 tahun
Rank	Praka	Captain	Sertu
Position of Assignment	Staff Logistic	Danki	Staff
Status	Marriage	Marriage	Marriage
Papua Operation Duty History	0	0	0

Design

This study uses a qualitative approach with a generic qualitative research design (Percy, W. H. et al., 2015), which aims to explore and understand the resilience abilities of participants when carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region.

Procedure

Before starting the interview, the researcher gave informed consent to the participants. The researcher conducted data collection by carrying out a semi-structured interview process. The interview process was conducted separately, at different times and places, using Zoom, G-Meet, and WhatsApp media. During the interview process, the researcher took notes and audio-recorded them with the consent of the participants. The researcher conducted the interview process in 1-2 sessions (as needed) within a maximum of 90 minutes.

Analysis Technique

We analyzed the interview data using the inductive thematic analysis method following (Braun & Clarke, 2006) process, which involved: (1) collecting and transcribing the verbal data as a whole; (2) generating initial codes from the interview data; (3) identifying themes; (4) conducting a theme review process; (5) defining and naming the emerged themes; and (6) writing reports or results.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Participant Background

Participant 1 (MZ/P1) is a TNIAD soldier with the rank of Chief Warrior. In his current assignment, he serves as a logistics staffer whose main task is to provide logistical support assistance to soldiers who are at posts scattered in several areas that are quite far and remote. P1 is married and has one child who is still a toddler. This is the first time he has received an operational assignment in the Papua region. His previous operational duty experience was on the RI-Malaysia border and also in Congo as a peacekeeper.

Participant 2 (N/P2) is an officer with the rank of Captain Infantry; in his current assignment, he serves as a Company Commander. P2 leads troops to secure the area under his responsibility in Deiyai. P2 is married with two children who have entered adolescence. He has quite a lot of experience in operational tasks, namely: operations in Timor-Leste (currently Timor-Leste), Aceh, Poso, and the RI-Malaysia border. However, he has never been assigned to Papua before. According to him, the operation on Papua has a higher level of risk compared to the previous operations he had carried out.

Participant 3 (RW/P3) is an Army NCO with the rank of First Sergeant. In this assignment, he served as a staff member whose main task was to find information about conditions in his area. P3 is married with one child who is still a toddler. He said that the current operation was his second assignment, where he had previously served in the Congo as a peacekeeper. According to him, this assignment has a higher level of vulnerability because, when in the field, they cannot distinguish people who are members of the KKB.

Main Themes

Participants' experiences as Army soldiers on duty in Papua provide the basis for inductively obtaining themes in this research. The themes are: 1. The existence of external support; 2. Concerns for personal and personnel safety 3. Efforts to overcome obstacles 4. Duties and responsibilities 5. Obstacles faced; 6. Closeness between personnel.

Theme 1. External support

Support in the KBBI dictionary can be interpreted as help or assistance. The external support obtained by TNI AD soldiers on duty in Papua is divided into two categories: helping to look after the family at home base and helping to overcome difficulties in the operating area. The difficulties experienced by families at home base are also a concern for TNI AD soldiers on duty in Papua. This is because they cannot directly overcome the difficulties experienced by their families, even though they have entrusted their families to their parents or close relatives. Korum (Home Command) is a soldier who is not involved with his unit in carrying out operational tasks and has the task of continuing to carry out the tasks of the unit. With the existence of korum in the unit, it helps TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational duties in Papua if there are difficulties experienced by their families at home base.

“But if they (the family) are experiencing difficulties, I usually ask for help from letting or my juniors at home base ... or sometimes I also report to my Danki, so that I can communicate with Korum there, to ask for help from Kakorum.” (P3)

In this case, TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region receive material and non-material support from family, friends, Task Forces (Satgas) in the same area, security forces, and local governments in the region. Internet signals or communication networks are very important for both participants. With a good internet network, they can find out the condition of their families at home and can help them when experiencing difficulties. Families provide support in the form of finances when the money

for side dishes (ULP) does not come down, as well as support in the form of encouragement in carrying out assignments.

“..the most important thing is that we always give news, because thank God there is a signal here too, so it is a form of encouragement for us to be able to monitor our family..”, “...for example, this month the ULP money was lowered late, maybe this time material support..” (P1)

“We were stationed in Deiyai, where the signal was smooth, so our relationship with our families or families in our homebase could carry out communication smoothly.”, “For their role, the family only provides support, where we here have received side dishes..” (P2)

Friends who have experience, the Task Force in Papua, or friends who have carried out assignments provide valuable information to participants regarding the conditions of the assignment area or how to approach the surrounding community. Colleagues who have carried out previous assignments can also provide information and experience about their duties to be applied to the current assignment. In addition, they can coordinate and learn from other task forces that have been in the operation area for a long time. They also sometimes get food assistance if they are experiencing difficulties in distributing logistics. Local security forces (Kodim or Polres) and local government cooperate with the Task Force to exchange information and conduct activities together so as to provide security for the community.

Theme 2. Concern for personal and personnel safety.

Concern in the KBBI dictionary indicates a feeling of worry or anxiety felt by participants. Both participants said that the security situation in their area is currently quite conducive, but they are still aware of security disturbances that can arise at any time. P1 said that he is always vigilant when he meets indigenous Papuans; he is worried that these Papuans are mountain people who are part of the pro-independence group.

“For indigenous Papuans, this is less so with us..”, “..so just blend in with the community there, so it's not too conspicuous like that. Because we don't know if people from the mountain will come down here or what...” (P1)

Even in activities with the community, participants will always be vigilant; if personnel want to leave the post, there must be at least 10 people. They do this to ensure that they can support each other in case of any disturbance to the personnel. Furthermore, as part of their approach, they engage in community activities while carrying full weapons for guarding purposes.

“Then the task force comes out with a minimum of 10 people using their weapons to make it safer, fully dressed, from helmets to vests..”(P3)

“.. in the afternoon playing volleyball with the community we wear civilian clothes, then there are also carrying out security using official clothes...” (P2)

Theme 3. Efforts to overcome obstacles.

Efforts in the KKBI are efforts, endeavors (to achieve a purpose, solve problems, find solutions, and so on); effort power, while obstacles in the KBBI contain the meaning of obstacles. When facing obstacles in operational tasks, they make various efforts to overcome them. These efforts include adjusting to the new environment, establishing relationships with the community, security forces, and local government, as well as applying post-placement strategies in order to be faster in making decisions.

“More often we do, we often play to the agency or the community itself, if to the Papuan community itself by bringing sargal (means of raising)..”, “..We often hang out at the terminal, so that they know that we are here..” (P1)

“..The point is that one example here, if we patrol the Buton tribal areas. We prioritize the people of the Buton tribe. In Bugis places, we prioritize Bugis people to communicate using their village language. So that they feel like they are coming home and feel protected, as well as to the indigenous people. We prioritize with local sons, so that communication is smoothly established..” (P2)

Their efforts in approaching the community are to use personnel who have the same tribe as the community; personnel who have the same tribe can more easily establish relationships with the local community. The efforts currently being made are to increase public trust in the TNI, which provides security in their area. According to P3, in order to overcome the lack of existing health workers, the Task Force's health personnel are seconded to help treat sick people.

“..We happened to have a Dantonkes, the Dantonkes happened to be at our post, then next to us was the NCO. Each of them is also equipped with health equipment. Sometimes when we carry out patrols, we help the community..” (P3)

Theme 4. Duties and responsibilities

Each person involved in the task force has duties and responsibilities in accordance with their position. In carrying out the functions of their positions, they have various strategies in order to carry out their duties smoothly and safely. One of the functions of the task force is to improve the economic level of the local community. The task force provides direct examples to the community by conducting catfish farming and hydroponic plants. The harvest from these activities will later be given to the community in the hope that they will be inspired to be able to apply it to improve the economy.

“...In addition, the task force program utilizes local plants, one of which is that we try to plant plants that we place in front of the Post, in the form of Poly Bags or we make Catfish ponds so that they can be imitated by the community ...”, “Later, if the livestock is successful here, we will invite the community at harvest time. And we will give some of it to the community as an example of livestock that also produce. (P2)

In addition, P3 conducts a show of force by using the complete main weapon system (alutsista) when carrying out patrols; this is a Psy War carried out with the aim of reducing the desire of people who want to damage security.

“..so we always carry out Show of Force permits to show off strength. With great strength, because they have little strength so they don't dare to show up..” (P3)

As for P1, who has the duty and responsibility to distribute logistics, he feels the need to get close to the lajuran (transportation in Papua) and the airport. He can send logistics to distant posts by leaving them with the lajuran in the same direction as the post.

“..The most obstacle is, yes, pushing it up ... so we approach a lot of people on land and at the airport..” (P1)

Theme 5. Obstacles faced

The theme of obstacles faced by participants is supported by the sub-themes of the lack of information obtained from the previous Task Force due to changes in the concept of operations, obstacles relating to indigenous Papuans, loss of internet signals, security disturbances, limited operational vehicles, difficulty in distributing logistics, minimal hospital health workers, and very cold weather or temperatures.

"..maybe because we are unfamiliar with them, they are unfamiliar with us, so we want to open the conversation so we are a bit confused..." (P1)

"..Every time there is an incident or something, the internet network is usually disconnected or turned off.", "...here is limited for vehicles..", "Health facilities here have a primary level hospital, but the staff, every time we go there, there are only 3 left..."(P3)

"..because the temperature is indeed cold here because it can reach 14 degrees at night and the weather is often foggy..." (P2)

The obstacles faced can affect the implementation of tasks if efforts are not made to overcome them. The obstacles faced have been explained in theme 3.

Theme 6. Closeness between personnel

In the assignment, participants have a close relationship with fellow Task Force personnel, despite their different ranks and classes. They will help each other with any personnel who have problems by trying to find solutions to the problems faced. In addition, each person has the freedom to express opinions and plan activities to be carried out before being decided by the eldest at his post.

"We as colleagues, or seniors try to approach, invite to chat at least they want to confide in reducing their thoughts, because usually if it's like that, they like to be alone, so they are afraid of being vulnerable. So they need to be approached and talked to."(P1)

".. about brainstorming, yes maybe, what activities are good for tomorrow, the plans that will be carried out.." (P3)

"..face to face leadership, where we gather together. Whether enlisted, non-commissioned officers or officers we are always together, we often hang out with them, we often what they confide in us then we will try to solve what is the problem." (P2)

Discussion

Based on the results of the data analysis of the research results, a major theme is obtained, which is a description of the themes obtained, namely the resilience of TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region. These difficulties strengthen or change individuals as they face and overcome them (Grotberg, 1997). The obstacles faced by TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region make them stronger in dealing with them and able to respond to these obstacles well. In organizing the factors that influence resilience, (Grotberg, 1997) organized them into I Have, I Am, and I Can.

Concern for personal and personnel safety and the obstacles faced were conditions felt by participants. They were concerned about security disturbances by pro-independence communities. The disturbances could be in the form of roadblocks, demonstrations, or convoys containing provocations. This condition causes anxiety felt by soldiers on duty, which, if not anticipated, will lead to greater security disturbances. The condition of the defense equipment received by the task force is felt to still not meet the needs; this can be seen from the limited support of operational vehicles that make the

mobility of the task force less than optimal. In addition, cold temperature conditions that reach 14 degrees Celsius are accompanied by weather that is often foggy, so the personnel must immediately adapt to the existing conditions.

The results of the interviews conducted show that the factor that shows participant resilience is found in theme 1 of external support. External support received by TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region comes from family, friends, Task Forces (Satgas) in the same area, security forces, and local governments in the region. According to (Grotberg, 1997), having one or more trusted people can increase the resilience of a person. The form of support is also felt in the form of material and non-material support in the form of financial support and information related to the situation and conditions of the operating area. The existence of personnel who have experience carrying out previous operational tasks is used as a role model that helps provide more comprehensive information and input related to problems in operational tasks.

In theme 4, duties and responsibilities show the I am factor of the resilience factor stated by (Grotberg, 1997). P1 is a logistics staff member in charge of sending logistics to posts that are quite far apart. He tries to find information related to lajuran from friends who have served in Papua in the hope that it can help him carry out his main duties. Meanwhile, P2 is a company commander who oversees approximately 100 Army soldiers. He has the main task of leading his members in order to complete operational tasks well, in accordance with the desired targets of his leadership. As an Army soldier, he feels that duty is an honor and must be carried out with full dedication.

Themes 3 and 6 are descriptions of the I can factor in the resilience factor expressed by (Grotberg, 1997). Efforts were made to overcome the obstacles faced and adjust to the new environment, enabling effective interaction with the local community, regional security forces, and local government employees. Resilience can make individuals more resilient when facing certain problems. In the context of carrying out operational tasks, resilience is needed so that individuals can solve problems and optimize their abilities (Malik, 2013).

CONCLUSION

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region experience concerns for personal safety and Task Force personnel and also experience various obstacles in carrying out operational tasks. However, external support and efforts to overcome existing obstacles by utilizing the information received by the Task Force can help overcome these conditions. By knowing the main tasks and responsibilities given, TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region try to carry out orders by utilizing the relationships or potential that exist in their area. So the resilience of TNI AD soldiers who are carrying out operational tasks in the Papua region can be said to be good because they are able to survive and adjust to the difficulties that exist.

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