

## IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP STYLE IN THE UNIT 81 OF KOPASSUS SOLDIERS

### IMPLEMENTAÇÃO DO ESTILO DE LIDERANÇA SITUACIONAL NA UNIDADE 81 DOS SOLDADOS KOPASSUS

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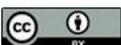
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#### Abstract

This study aims to analyze the implementation of situational leadership in Unit 81 Kopassus and examine its impact on personnel performance and operational effectiveness. The research employs a qualitative phenomenological approach to explore leadership practices based on the lived experiences of commanders and personnel within a high-risk military environment. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, and document analysis. The informants were selected using purposive sampling based on rank, operational experience, and direct involvement in tactical missions. Data were analyzed using phenomenological procedures, including data reduction, coding, thematic categorization, and validation through triangulation and member checking to ensure credibility. The findings reveal that commanders adaptively apply four leadership styles consisting of telling (S1), selling (S2), participating (S3), and delegating (S4) depending on personnel readiness and situational demands. The telling style is dominant in high-risk operations requiring rapid and precise decision-making; selling is applied during training and coaching processes to strengthen competence and motivation; participating is used in tactical decision-making to enhance cohesion and collective responsibility, while delegating is implemented for highly mature personnel to promote autonomy and leadership development. The situational application of these styles positively

#### Resumo

*Este estudo visa analisar a implementação da liderança situacional na Unidade 81 Kopassus e examinar seu impacto no desempenho do pessoal e na eficácia operacional. A pesquisa emprega uma abordagem fenomenológica qualitativa para explorar as práticas de liderança com base nas experiências vividas por comandantes e pessoal em um ambiente militar de alto risco. Os dados foram coletados por meio de entrevistas em profundidade, observação e análise documental. Os informantes foram selecionados por amostragem intencional com base em patente, experiência operacional e envolvimento direto em missões táticas. Os dados foram analisados utilizando procedimentos fenomenológicos, incluindo redução de dados, codificação, categorização temática e validação por meio de triangulação e verificação com os participantes para garantir a credibilidade. Os resultados revelam que os comandantes aplicam de forma adaptativa quatro estilos de liderança: diretivo (S1), persuasivo (S2), participativo (S3) e delegativo (S4), dependendo da prontidão do pessoal e das demandas situacionais. O estilo diretivo é dominante em operações de alto risco que exigem tomada de decisão rápida e precisa; o estilo persuasivo é aplicado durante os processos de treinamento e orientação para fortalecer a competência e a motivação; A participação é utilizada na tomada de decisões táticas para fortalecer a coesão e a responsabilidade coletiva, enquanto a*



influences discipline, coordination, trust, and overall performance. The study concludes that leadership flexibility is a critical factor in maintaining operational readiness in high-risk organizations. Although limited to a single unit and qualitative scope, this research contributes theoretically by reinforcing situational leadership theory in military contexts and practically by providing insights for adaptive leadership development in strategic security institutions.

**Keywords:** Situational Leadership. Commander. Military Leadership. Performance. Unit 81 Kopassus.

*delegação é implementada para militares altamente experientes, visando promover a autonomia e o desenvolvimento da liderança. A aplicação situacional desses estilos influencia positivamente a disciplina, a coordenação, a confiança e o desempenho geral. O estudo conclui que a flexibilidade da liderança é um fator crítico para manter a prontidão operacional em organizações de alto risco. Embora limitada a uma única unidade e com escopo qualitativo, esta pesquisa contribui teoricamente ao reforçar a teoria da liderança situacional em contextos militares e, na prática, ao fornecer insights para o desenvolvimento da liderança adaptativa em instituições de segurança estratégica.*

**Palavras-chave:** Liderança Situacional. Comandante. Liderança Militar. Desempenho. Unidade 81 Kopassus.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Leadership is the norm of a person's behavior when that person tries to influence the behavior of others as he or she sees it. In this case, the effort to harmonize perceptions between the person who will influence the behavior and the one who will be influenced becomes very important. The behavior of the Commander should encourage personnel performance by showing a sense of friendliness, closeness, and consideration towards subordinates, both as individuals and as a group. Positive leader behavior can encourage groups in directing and motivating individuals to work together in groups in order to realize organizational or unit goals.

In accordance with the situational leadership theory proposed by Hersey and Blanchard who developed a leadership style based on the maturity level of subordinates, which includes four styles, namely: dictating style (telling), selling style (selling), involving style (participating), delegating style (delegating). Hersey and Blanchard revealed a leadership theory known as the "Cycle Theory of Leadership" which stems from the human life cycle. According to their research, leadership styles tend to vary from situation to situation (Sedarmayanti, 2011).

Thus, although there are many other important situational variables such as: organization, job tasks, supervisors and working time, the emphasis in situational leadership is only on the behavior of leaders and subordinates. The behavior of followers or subordinates is very important to know situational leadership. In essence, the situational approach suggests that effective leader behavior should always pay attention to the situation at hand. Treat subordinates according to their individual needs. Basically, in every leadership style there are 2 main elements, namely the element of direction (directive behavior) and the element of assistance (supporting behavior). From these two elements, leadership styles can be grouped or combined from the two main behaviors of the leader which then results in four basic leadership styles, namely dictating style (telling), selling style (selling), participating style (participating), delegating style (delegating).

Situational leadership style is quite interesting in the current era, because leaders with this style will always try to adjust to the situation and conditions of the organization, and are flexible in adapting or adjusting to the maturity and readiness of subordinates and their work environment. This is in accordance with the current conditions and situations that require leaders to be accommodating and aspirational to their work environment. The situational leadership style according to Hersey and Blanchard is based on the interconnection between the number of instructions and directions given by the leader and the amount of socio-emotional support provided by the leader (Toha, 2003). The level of readiness or maturity of the followers shown in carrying out specific tasks, functions, or goals greatly influences the style.

The success of an organization will not be separated from various supporting factors. Situational leadership style is allegedly able to influence the performance of subordinates. These demands direct the organization or units involved in it to work effectively and efficiently. Similarly, Unit 81 Kopassus (Sat 81 Kopassus) is tasked with counteracting, acting, and restoring to overcome problems regarding the integrity and sovereignty of the Unitary State of the Republic of Indonesia. Referring to the main task, in the implementation of activities to overcome the problems of the integrity and sovereignty of the State, it is necessary to pay attention to the performance of each element of the personnel in it, in order to obtain optimal results in every task carried out by the unit.

The readiness of Unit 81 Kopassus should not be ruled out. This is clear evidence that the readiness of the TNI, especially Sat 81 Kopassus, needs to be maintained and always in a condition that is ready to be involved. But in fact Unit 81 Kopassus is less than optimal in carrying out its roles and functions. Where in fact, clear and structured tasks in each assignment have been well designed, so that leaders or Commanders lack maturity in carrying out their leadership. This is due to the political policies that developed in his era and times. Assignments are more individual than unit, so that existing leaders tend to lack responsibility for their direct subordinates. Related to this, in order to support optimal unit readiness, it needs to be supported by adequate personnel performance. Credible leadership is the main requirement in maintaining and improving the readiness of Unit 81 Kopassus, the role of unit commander elements consisting of Unit Commander (Dan Unit), Team Commander (Dan Tim), Detachment Commander (Dan Den), Battalion Commander (Danyon) and Unit Commander (Dan Sat) is needed. Capable and capable leaders in applying certain styles in their leadership should first understand who the subordinates they lead, understand the strengths and weaknesses of their subordinates, and understand how to optimize the strengths of subordinates to compensate for the weaknesses they have.

Unit 81 Kopassus is tasked with carrying out counter-terror operations and other special operations against strategic and selected targets, as well as organizing activities in the fields of intelligence, operations, Human Resources (HR), logistics, and planning, in order to support the main task of Sat 81 Kopassus. Referring to the main task, in the implementation of activities to overcome existing problems, it is necessary to pay attention to the performance of each personnel element in it, in order to obtain optimal results in every task carried out by the unit.

This study aims to analyze the implementation of situational leadership in Unit 81 Kopassus by identifying how commanders apply the four leadership styles consisting of telling, selling, participating, and delegating according to personnel readiness levels and operational situational characteristics, as well as to examine the impact of these leadership styles on personnel performance, operational effectiveness, and leadership capacity development within a high-risk military organization.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

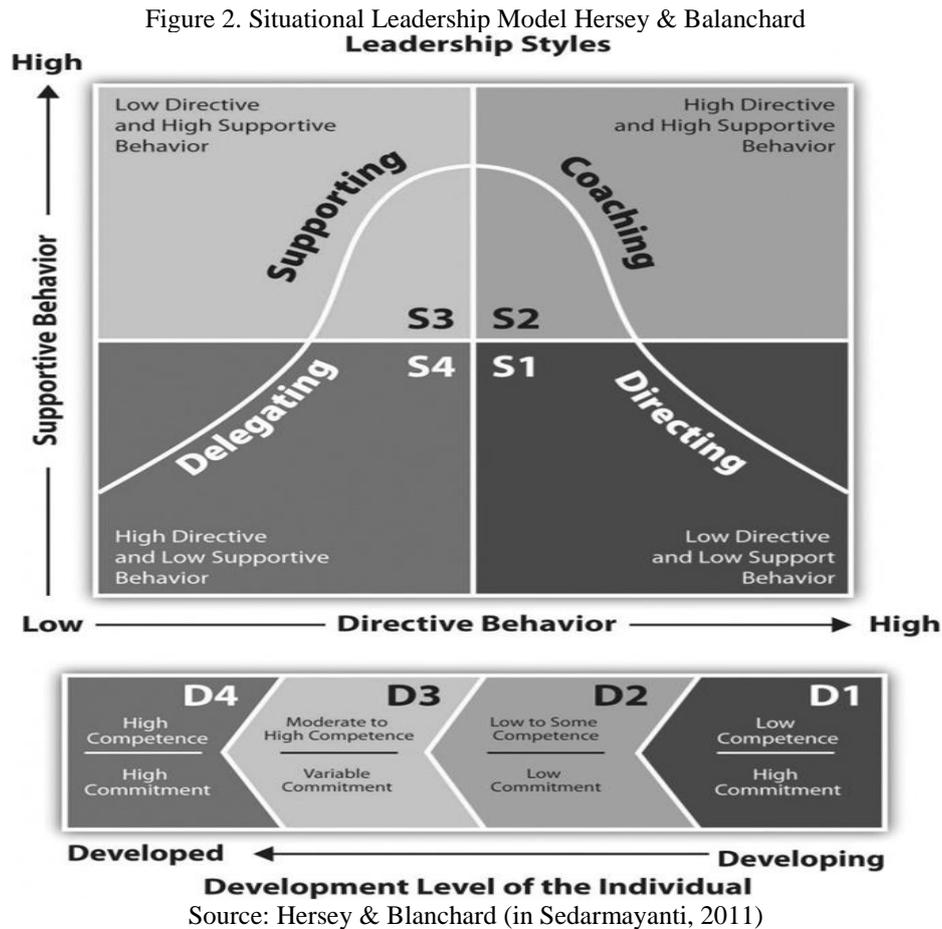
Success or effectiveness in an organization or group depends on the fit between the leader's style and the extent to which the situation gives control to the leader as proposed by Fred Fiedler's leadership model (Mulyadi, 2018). He believes that one of the main factors for successful leadership is the basic leadership style of an individual that is fixed or will not change. Sunderman, H.M. & Orsini, J. (2024) stressed out, there is a close relationship between leadership identity development and meaning making, which is considered an important element in understanding how individuals internalize their leadership roles where individuals use reflection and experience to construct their leadership identity.

Figure 1. Fidler's Contingency Leadership Model



Source: Sedarmayanti. 2011

According to Hersey & Blanchard, there is a clear relationship between the level of maturity of people and/or groups and the type of power source that has the highest likelihood of eliciting compliance in those people. Situational leadership views maturity as the ability and willingness of people or groups to assume responsibility, directing their own behavior in certain situations. It should be re-emphasized that maturity is a task-specific concept and depends on what the leader wants to achieve (Sedarmayanti, 2011).



The leader should understand the maturity of his subordinates so that he is not wrong in applying the leadership style. The combination of task behavior and relationship behavior creates a leadership style as shown in Figure 2, consisting of four situational leadership styles as follows:

First, Telling is a style for followers who have a low level of maturity. This means that people do not have the ability and willingness to take responsibility for doing something is incompetent or unsure. The role of the leader in this case is to provide direction, supervision. This style is characterized by the behavior of leaders who assign roles and tell people what, how, when and where to do tasks, (S1).

Second, Selling (peddling) is a style that is applied to followers with a low to moderate level of maturity, people do not have the ability but are willing to assume responsibility for doing a task is confident but lacks skills. It is called "selling" because the leader provides almost all the direction. But through two-way communication and explanation, followers are expected to take part in the desired behavior, (S2).

Third, Participating is a leadership style applied to followers with maturity levels from medium to high. People at this maturity level have the ability but do not want to do the things the leader wants. Called "participating", it means that leaders and followers share responsibility for decision making, and the role of the leader in this case is to facilitate and communicate with followers, sign (S3).

Fourth, Delegation is a leadership style applied to followers who have a high level of maturity. People with this level of maturity have the willingness and ability or have the confidence to assume responsibility, coded (S4). In this style, the leader's direction and support is low, the leader leaves the responsibility of implementing the plan to mature followers to carry out the work themselves. Aherman, (1966) and Webber (1981) in Youlk (1994; 146) suggest that the main aspects of delegation are the diversity and magnitude of responsibilities, the amount of freedom or range of choices allowed in deciding how to carry out responsibilities, the authority to take action and carry out decisions without prior approval, the frequency and nature of reporting requirements, and the flow of information about work performance.

The four situational leadership styles above, expressed by Hersey & Blanchard (in Badeni, 2014) state that telling = directing, selling = coaching, participating = supporting, delegating = achievement-oriented. Furthermore, it is explained that the four components of the situational leadership style have a major influence on the motivation of members in making decisions. So, the emphasis of situational leadership behavior is on the pattern of building relationships between administrators and members. As a board according to situational leadership theory, it ideally prioritizes the habit of listening, communicating in multiple directions, facilitating, clarifying, and providing social or emotional support to followers.

The accuracy of the implementation of the leadership style is based on the level of maturity or readiness of the followers, namely the ability and willingness of the followers in terms of taking responsibility for directing the behavior of the followers themselves. The maturity of the members consists of: Low maturity (M1), in which case members do not have the ability and willingness to take responsibility. Medium low maturity (M2), meaning that members do not have the ability but have the desire to take responsibility. Medium to high maturity (M3) in this case the member has the ability but



actualized at certain times. The potential for certain behavior is called ability, while the expression of this potential is known as performance.

Performance is the result of a process that refers to clan, measured and obtained by an organization both profit oriented and non-profit oriented organizations produced during a period of time based on predetermined provisions or agreements. Performance is a description of the level of achievement of the implementation of an activity program or policy in realizing the goals, objectives, vision and mission of the organization as outlined through the strategic planning of an organization. Several definitions state that performance is the result of work that can be achieved by a person or group of people in an organization both quantitatively and qualitatively (Moeheriono, 2014).

According to Irham (2015) the results and quality of maximum work performance cannot be separated by the results built by the management of the organization because it is impossible for a good work performance to be obtained without serious and in-depth handling of the management of the organization. This is in accordance with what Taylor said, that management needs to take several actions to ensure that the organization is able to face various problems in the future. And one of the parties who have an important role in management is the manager or leader, because the leader is one of the most responsible parties in every action that will occur in an organization. The statement above can be concluded that one of the things that can affect the quality of performance will be determined by the ability of a leader to build and control the workplace atmosphere for the better.

Table 1. Illustration of Leadership Style Implementation

Steps	Style	Activities
<b>Orientation</b>	1. S1	Explaining the purpose and role of each individual in carrying out their duties.
	2. S2	Encouraging subordinates to work together to find the best ways to carry out their duties.
<b>Individual Assignment</b>	1. S1	Explaining responsibilities and roles
	2. S4	Delegating authority in accordance with their duties and responsibilities and provide support that allows subordinates to work well.

<b>Decision Retrieval Process</b>	1. S3	Strengthening coordination and remind her of everything she is responsible for.
	2. S2	Identifying problems and alternative solutions.

Source: Adopted from Djokosantoso Moeljono (2013)

Based on the description and illustration of situational leadership styles above, it can be formulated that in choosing the leadership style of the element Commander of Unit 81 Kopassus, there is no better style. However, it is recommended to choose one of the leadership styles for the situation and conditions. There are times when S1 is needed, but other times S4 is needed, or others. The choice of leadership style is prioritized on the issue of who a leader is dealing with or, in other words, who is his subordinate. To simplify the theoretical approach taken in this study, it can be seen in table 2, as follows:

Table 2. Description of Situational Leadership Style with Task Behavior, Relationship Behavior and Subordinates' Level of Maturity.

<b>Leadership Style</b>	<b>Behavior Tasks</b>	<b>Relationship Behavior</b>	<b>Subordinate Maturity (M)</b>	<b>Leadership Traits</b>
<i>Telling</i> (S1)	High	Low	Low (M1) 1. Unable 2. Unwilling/not steady	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Giving Orders</li> <li>• Close Supervision</li> <li>• One-way Communication</li> </ul>
<i>Selling</i> (S2)	High	High	Low to M2 1. Unable 2. Want/confident	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explaining the decision</li> <li>• Conducting Briefings</li> <li>• Two-way Communication</li> </ul>
<i>Participating</i> (S3)	Low	High	M2 high to (M3) 1. Able 2. But unwilling / unsure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leaders and subordinates give each other ideas</li> <li>• Together with subordinates make decisions</li> </ul>
<i>Delegating</i> (S4)	Low	Low	High (M4) 1. Able 2. Want/Convinced	Delegation of authority and decisions to subordinates

Source: Analyzed by the authors, 2018

### 3 METHODS

This study employs a qualitative research design with a phenomenological approach to deeply explore the lived experiences and subjective meanings of leadership implementation in Unit 81 Kopassus. The phenomenological approach was chosen to

understand how situational leadership is perceived, interpreted, and practiced by commanders and personnel within real operational contexts (Moleong, 2011).

Research participants were selected using purposive sampling with the following criteria: active personnel of Unit 81 Kopassus, having experience in operational assignments, holding leadership positions (such as Unit Commander, Team Commander, Detachment Commander, or Battalion Commander) or serving directly under such leadership structures, and having a minimum of five years of service to ensure sufficient organizational experience. A total of 12 participants were involved in this study, consisting of 5 commanders and 7 personnel. The number of participants was determined based on the principle of data saturation, meaning that no new themes emerged in subsequent interviews.

Data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews, non-participant observation, and document and literature review. Interviews were conducted face-to-face with an average duration of 60–90 minutes. The interview questions focused on leadership experiences in the field, decision-making processes, forms of communication between superiors and subordinates, levels of personnel readiness or maturity, and their impact on task implementation and performance achievement. To strengthen empirical credibility, the research findings were supported by direct quotations from participants representing their real experiences in dealing with various operational situations.

Data analysis followed a phenomenological analysis procedure adapted from Moustakas (1994). The process began with horizontalization, identifying significant statements relevant to leadership experiences. This was followed by open coding to group units of meaning into initial categories, and then axial coding to develop major themes such as directive behavior, supportive communication, delegation practices, and the influence of leadership on performance. The next stage involved constructing textual descriptions (what participants experienced) and structural descriptions (how those experiences occurred within specific situational contexts), culminating in the formulation of the essence or core meaning of situational leadership implementation in Unit 81 Kopassus. The analysis process was conducted iteratively and reflectively to ensure depth of interpretation.

To ensure credibility and trustworthiness, this study applied source and method triangulation by comparing data from various informants and integrating interviews,

observations, and documentation. Member checking was also conducted by asking several participants to review summaries of the researcher's interpretations to ensure accuracy of meaning. In addition, peer debriefing was carried out to minimize subjective bias, and an audit trail was maintained to document the entire process of data collection and analysis. These steps were undertaken to strengthen methodological rigor and enhance the validity of the research findings.

## 4 RESULT

The research findings indicate that the implementation of situational leadership styles in Unit 81 Kopassus is applied adaptively according to personnel maturity levels and the characteristics of the operational situations encountered. Based on interviews and observations, it was found that commanders do not apply a single leadership style consistently; rather, they adjust their approach depending on task context, operational risk level, as well as the experience and competence of team members.

### 4.1 Implementation of the Telling Style (S1) in high-risk situations

In operations with high levels of risk and significant time pressure, commanders tend to apply the telling style (high directive behavior, low supportive behavior). In such conditions, instructions are delivered firmly, clearly, and in detail, without opening space for extended discussion, in order to maintain operational effectiveness and security. As stated by one informant:

*"In high-risk operations, the commander gives very clear and direct instructions. There is no room for long discussions because decisions must be fast and precise."* (Informant 2)

Another informant added:

*"When facing strategic targets, the orders are already structured. We just focus on executing according to the directives."* (Informant 5)

These findings indicate that the S1 style is used when members require specific direction, particularly in the initial phase of a mission or during crisis situations.

Beyond the initial phase of operations, the telling style (S1) is also predominantly applied when the unit faces urgent, unexpected situations with a high potential for threat escalation. Under such circumstances, commanders prioritize clarity of orders and adherence to procedures over deliberative processes. Instructions are delivered in a one-way manner to minimize role ambiguity and reduce the risk of misinterpretation in the field. Personnel understand this approach as a protective mechanism to ensure team safety and mission success, rather than as a limitation of participation.

Furthermore, the findings reveal that the application of the telling style is not perceived negatively by personnel, as long as it is used contextually and proportionally. Members recognize that this style is applied not due to a lack of trust in their capabilities, but because situational demands require rapid and centralized decision-making. As expressed by one experienced member:

*“We know when the commander has to be firm and one-directional. It doesn’t mean we are not trusted, but the situation really demands it.”* (Informant 6)

Thus, the telling style (S1) functions as a crucial operational control mechanism in high-risk situations, while simultaneously reinforcing discipline, command order, and task execution effectiveness. Its application demonstrates the commander’s situational awareness in adjusting leadership behavior to the level of risk and complexity of the operational environment.

#### **4.2 Implementation of the Selling Style (S2) in the coaching and training process**

In the context of coaching and training, commanders of Unit 81 Kopassus tend to apply the selling style (S2), characterized by a combination of high directive behavior and high supportive behavior. This style is primarily used when personnel demonstrate strong motivation and commitment but still require reinforcement of technical competence, procedural alignment, or deeper tactical understanding. In such situations, commanders not only provide instructions but also explain the rationale behind each decision and operational procedure. As stated by one commander:

*“In training, we don’t just give orders; we also explain the reasons behind every procedure. The goal is for members to understand, not just execute.”* (Informant 1)

This approach illustrates that the coaching process is not one-directional but dialogical. Commanders create space for two-way communication through briefings, after action reviews, and tactical discussions. These activities aim to build conceptual understanding while simultaneously strengthening members' confidence in facing real operational situations. A team member explained:

*“The commander often gives briefings and opens question-and-answer sessions. So we understand why certain tactics are chosen.”* (Informant 7)

These findings indicate that the selling style serves as a bridge between formal instruction and the internalization of professional values. During training, the commander acts as a coach who actively shapes both the mental and technical readiness of personnel. Members at the M2 maturity level those with high willingness but not yet fully competent receive structured guidance along with emotional support that reinforces their motivation.

#### **4.3 Implementation of the Participating Style (S3) in tactical decision-making**

The research findings indicate that the participating style (S3) is applied when personnel possess adequate competence and experience, yet in certain situations require psychological support, reinforcement of self-confidence, or alignment of perceptions before tactical decisions are made. In this context, the commander no longer dominates instructions but instead acts as a facilitator of discussion and coordinator of ideas. Task behavior tends to be low, while relationship behavior is high, as the primary focus is to build mutual understanding and collective commitment toward the decisions to be executed. One informant stated:

*“If the team is already experienced, the commander often asks for input before determining the final step.”* (Informant 4)

This approach demonstrates that decision-making is not entirely top-down but involves collective consideration based on members' field experience. Tactical discussions are often conducted in limited and controlled forums, especially when facing complex operational dynamics that require rapid strategic adjustments. This process creates a sense of ownership over the decisions made. As another informant expressed:

*“We feel more prepared to carry out decisions when we are involved in the discussion. The commander still leads, but we are given space to share our views.”* (Informant 8)

These findings show that the participating style strengthens team cohesion and enhances trust between commanders and members. Participation in the decision-making process also increases personnel’s moral responsibility for the outcomes achieved. In situations where members are at the M3 maturity level having strong technical ability but sometimes hesitant to take initiative interpersonal support from the commander becomes a key factor in fostering their confidence and assertiveness.

Moreover, the S3 style contributes to reinforcing a culture of open communication within the unit. Commanders actively encourage information exchange and collective evaluation after task execution. One informant explained:

*“After a mission or simulation, we sit together to discuss what went well and what needs improvement. The commander doesn’t blame us, but invites us to learn from the situation.”* (Informant 9)

Thus, the implementation of the participating style (S3) not only affects the quality of tactical decisions but also enhances reflective capacity and organizational learning within Unit 81 Kopassus. This style demonstrates leadership flexibility in adjusting levels of control and support according to personnel readiness, resulting in decisions that are more contextual, adaptive, and collectively accepted.

#### **4.4 Implementation of the Delegating Style (S4) for highly mature personnel**

The research findings indicate that the delegating style (S4) is applied to personnel with a high level of maturity (M4), namely members who not only possess strong technical competence and operational experience but also demonstrate commitment, discipline, and confidence in carrying out their duties. In this situation, commanders provide relatively low levels of direction and support because personnel are considered capable of managing responsibilities independently in accordance with mission objectives. Delegation is carried out in a structured manner while remaining within the established chain of command and operational regulations. As stated by one informant:

*“If the team is fully prepared and understands the terrain and operational targets, the commander gives us full trust to execute the technical aspects in the field.”* (Informant 6)

This statement shows that trust becomes the primary foundation in the application of the delegating style. Commanders no longer regulate every technical step in detail but instead provide a framework of objectives, operational boundaries, and success indicators, while execution strategies are entrusted to lower-level commanders or the assigned team. This model reflects a shift in the leader’s role from direct controller to strategic director. Another informant emphasized:

*“We are given the authority to make tactical decisions as long as we stay within the overall mission plan. That makes us more responsible and confident.”* (Informant 9)

These findings indicate that the delegating style does not imply the absence of leadership, but rather a form of trust based on an objective evaluation of members’ readiness. Delegation also enhances efficiency in field decision-making, particularly in situations requiring rapid responses without waiting for further instructions from higher command.

Furthermore, the implementation of the S4 style contributes to the development of a leadership pipeline within the unit. By providing autonomy to team or detachment commanders, the organization indirectly prepares future leaders who are trained in strategic decision-making and risk management. One commander stated:

*“Delegation is part of preparing the next generation of leaders. If they are not given space, they will not develop.”* (Informant 2)

Thus, the delegating style (S4) not only impacts short-term operational effectiveness but also strengthens long-term leadership capacity within Unit 81 Kopassus. The application of this style reflects organizational maturity in managing human resources adaptively and demonstrates that leadership flexibility is a key factor in sustaining the unit’s readiness and professionalism.

#### **4.5 The impact of situational leadership implementation on performance**

The research findings indicate that the adaptive implementation of situational leadership has a significant impact on improving both personnel performance and the

overall operational readiness of Unit 81 Kopassus. The commander's flexibility in adjusting leadership styles according to members' maturity levels and the characteristics of operational situations creates role clarity, precision in action, and more effective coordination in the field. Personnel stated that contextual leadership approaches help them better understand task expectations and performance standards to be achieved. As expressed by one informant:

*“When the leadership style is adjusted to the team's condition, we become more focused and know exactly what to do. That greatly helps improve our readiness.”* (Informant 3)

Positive impacts are also evident in terms of personnel motivation and self-confidence. Members feel valued when involved in decision-making (S3) and trusted when given delegation (S4). Conversely, in situations requiring firmness (S1), they understand that one-way directives are intended to ensure safety and mission effectiveness. This understanding strengthens loyalty and commitment to the commander's leadership. One informant explained:

*“We can accept firm orders in critical situations, and we also feel appreciated when involved in discussions. That makes us solid as a team.”* (Informant 8)

Operationally, the implementation of situational leadership contributes to increased discipline, responsiveness to changing conditions, and minimized errors in task execution. Post-operation evaluations show that coordination among unit elements becomes more structured when leadership styles are aligned with members' readiness levels. This alignment positively affects mission target achievement and time efficiency in task completion.

Furthermore, the situational approach strengthens a culture of organizational learning. Joint evaluation and reflection processes after training sessions and operations encourage continuous improvement. One commander stated:

*“By adjusting the leadership style, we can see the development of members over time. Performance improves because they feel supported and guided according to their needs.”* (Informant 1)

These findings demonstrate that situational leadership influences not only short-term performance outcomes but also long-term capacity building, including technical skills, mental resilience, and leadership succession. Leadership flexibility becomes a key

factor in maintaining stability, readiness, and professionalism within Unit 81 Kopassus in facing complex and dynamic threats.

Thus, the impact of situational leadership implementation on performance can be observed in three main dimensions: enhanced operational effectiveness, strengthened motivation and team cohesion, and sustainable organizational capacity development. This confirms that alignment between leadership style, personnel maturity level, and situational characteristics is a crucial determinant in achieving optimal performance.

## **5 DISCUSSION**

### **5.1 Implementation of the Telling Style (S1) in high-risk situations**

The implementation of the telling style (S1) in high-risk situations within Unit 81 Kopassus demonstrates that directive leadership becomes crucial when the organization faces time pressure, real threats, and high operational complexity. These findings are consistent with Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, which emphasizes that a style characterized by high task orientation and low supportive behavior is effective when situations demand clarity of command and strong control. In military contexts, particularly in high-risk special units, speed and accuracy of decision-making are often more critical than participative processes. Therefore, the use of one-way instructions in critical conditions does not represent an exercise of power dominance, but rather a strategy to maintain command stability and minimize operational errors.

These findings are also aligned with Fiedler's contingency theory, which states that in highly favorable or highly unfavorable situations, task-oriented leadership tends to be more effective than relationship-oriented leadership. The dynamic and uncertain nature of counter-terrorism operations can be categorized as an extreme situation, making direct control by the leader a structural necessity. Previous research in military settings has shown that directive leadership enhances coordination and rapid response in high-risk conditions (Common, 2025). Furthermore, Klarström et al. (2022) highlight that leadership identity in high-risk organizations develops through a leader's ability to accurately interpret situations and adjust leadership behavior according to contextual demands.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the telling style is not perceived negatively by personnel as long as it is applied contextually and proportionally. The culture of discipline and professionalism within Unit 81 Kopassus fosters a shared understanding that firm instructions in critical situations are intended to ensure safety and mission success. This strengthens the argument that leadership effectiveness is determined not only by subordinate characteristics but also by the alignment between leadership style and the level of risk in the task environment. Thus, the application of the S1 style in high-risk situations reflects leadership adaptability as the core principle of the situational approach, while demonstrating that behavioral flexibility is a key factor in maintaining unit performance and operational readiness.

## **5.2 Implementation of the Selling Style (S2) in the coaching and training process**

The implementation of the selling style (S2) in the coaching and training process at Unit 81 Kopassus demonstrates that the combination of clear direction and two-way communication is an effective approach to enhancing personnel competence and readiness. In this context, commanders not only provide technical instructions but also explain the rationale behind each procedure and tactical decision. This approach aligns with Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, which states that the selling style is effectively applied to subordinates at the M2 readiness level—those who have high motivation but still require capability reinforcement. Thus, leadership functions not merely as a control mechanism, but also as a means of learning and internalizing professional values.

These findings are supported by leadership literature emphasizing the importance of persuasive communication and coaching in improving performance. According to Salicru (2023), effective leadership is not solely outcome-oriented but also focused on human resource development through constructive communication. Similarly, Elliot (2025) asserts that competency-based performance improvement requires an active leadership role in providing direction as well as constructive feedback. In the military context, structured coaching or training approaches have been proven to enhance personnel's mental and technical readiness before deployment in real operations.

The application of the selling style in training contributes to the development of a culture of evaluation and continuous improvement. Post-training discussions and feedback sessions create a space for collective reflection that strengthens team cohesion and increases trust in leadership. This demonstrates that the effectiveness of the S2 style lies not only in balancing task and relationship behaviors, but also in its ability to build long-term commitment to high operational standards. Therefore, the selling style in the coaching process serves as an important transitional strategy to promote the advancement of personnel maturity to higher readiness levels, while simultaneously strengthening the overall foundation of organizational performance.

### **5.3 Implementation of the Participating Style (S3) in tactical decision-making**

The implementation of the participating style (S3) in tactical decision-making within Unit 81 Kopassus demonstrates that personnel involvement in strategic discussions is a crucial factor in improving decision quality and team cohesion. This style is characterized by low task behavior and high relationship behavior, with the commander acting as a facilitator who encourages the exchange of ideas before a final decision is made. These findings are consistent with Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, which states that the S3 style is effectively applied to subordinates at the M3 maturity level individuals who possess adequate technical competence but may at times require psychological support or reinforcement of self-confidence. In the context of dynamic tactical operations, focused and structured discussions enable leaders to gain more comprehensive field perspectives without compromising command authority.

Theoretically, the participative leadership approach is also supported by Sipahutar et al. (2025), who emphasizes that leadership is the ability to influence a group to achieve shared goals through effective interaction. Participation in decision-making enhances a sense of ownership over the policies adopted, thereby strengthening commitment to task execution. Furthermore, Moreno & Cutang (2024) asserts that communicative relational patterns between leaders and members can increase intrinsic motivation and reinforce group solidarity. In a professional military context, controlled involvement in tactical discussions does not weaken the chain of command, but rather serves as a strategy to optimize the team's collective experience.

Moreover, the findings indicate that the participating style contributes to fostering a culture of learning and collective reflection following task execution. Joint evaluations and the exchange of experiences strengthen the unit's adaptive capacity in responding to continuously evolving situations. This aligns with Gibson's (1997) view that organizational effectiveness is greatly influenced by the quality of interaction between leaders and members in decision-making processes. Thus, the application of the S3 style in Unit 81 Kopassus not only enhances the quality of tactical decisions but also reinforces trust, shared responsibility, and sustained operational readiness. The leader's flexibility in shifting to a participative approach demonstrates the practical implementation of situational leadership principles within a high-risk organizational context.

#### **5.4 Implementation of the Delegating Style (S4) for highly mature personnel**

The implementation of the delegating style (S4) for highly mature personnel in Unit 81 Kopassus demonstrates that the delegation of authority represents a form of strategic trust granted to members who possess strong competence, experience, and commitment. In this context, commanders provide general guidance regarding objectives and operational boundaries, while technical execution is entrusted to lower-level commanders or the assigned teams. These findings align with Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory, which states that the S4 style is effectively applied to subordinates at the M4 readiness level—individuals who are both capable and willing to take responsibility independently. Thus, the leader's role shifts from direct supervisor to strategic overseer who ensures alignment between task execution and organizational goals.

Theoretically, delegation is also associated with the concept of empowerment in modern leadership. Meerits & Kivipõld (2020) emphasizes that competency-based performance improvement requires autonomy so that individuals can optimize their capabilities to the fullest extent. Similarly, Todorović & Todorović (2020) argues that effective leaders are those who develop subordinates' potential through measured delegation of responsibility. In the context of a professional military organization, delegation does not mean relinquishing control; rather, it optimizes the hierarchical

command structure so that field decision-making can occur swiftly, accurately, and in accordance with situational dynamics.

The implementation of the delegating style in Unit 81 Kopassus contributes to sustainable leadership development within the organization. By granting decision-making authority to team or detachment commanders, the organization systematically prepares future leaders trained in risk management and strategic responsibility. This is consistent with Sunderman and Orsini's (2024) perspective, which highlights that leadership identity develops through real experiences in interpreting responsibility and decision-making. Therefore, the S4 style not only impacts short-term operational effectiveness but also strengthens long-term organizational capacity through systematic leadership succession and continuous professional development.

### **5.5 The impact of situational leadership implementation on performance**

The research findings indicate that the implementation of situational leadership in Unit 81 Kopassus has a significant impact on improving personnel performance and the unit's operational effectiveness. The commander's flexibility in adjusting leadership styles ranging from telling (S1), selling (S2), participating (S3), to delegating (S4) enables adaptive responses to task dynamics and varying levels of personnel readiness. These findings are consistent with Hersey and Blanchard's theory, which emphasizes that leadership effectiveness is determined by the alignment between leadership style and subordinates' maturity levels. In the context of high-risk organizations, a leader's ability to accurately assess situations and shift approaches appropriately has been shown to strengthen coordination, discipline, and the speed of decision-making.

Empirically, previous studies have also demonstrated that adaptive leadership is positively correlated with both individual and organizational performance. Abdurachman (2022) asserts that performance results from the interaction of ability, motivation, and opportunity, all of which are strongly influenced by leadership quality. Similarly, Gibson (1997) states that organizational effectiveness largely depends on a leader's ability to manage individual and group behavior contextually. In the military context, leadership that adjusts levels of direction and support has been proven to enhance mental readiness, team cohesion, and mission success.

Furthermore, the findings indicate that the impact of situational leadership is not only operational but also strategic and sustainable. Applying the appropriate leadership style at the right time fosters trust between commanders and personnel, strengthens a culture of professionalism, and promotes leadership succession within the organization. This demonstrates that situational leadership functions as an integrative mechanism that aligns command structures with the psychological dynamics and competencies of members. Therefore, the implementation of situational leadership in Unit 81 Kopassus directly contributes to improved performance, operational readiness, and organizational resilience in facing complex and high-risk challenges.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This study aims to analyze the implementation of situational leadership in Unit 81 Kopassus and its impact on personnel performance and operational effectiveness. The findings indicate that commanders adaptively apply four leadership styles consisting of telling (S1), selling (S2), participating (S3), and delegating (S4) in accordance with personnel readiness levels and the characteristics of the situations encountered. The telling style is predominantly used in high-risk situations requiring firm instructions and rapid responses; the selling style is applied in coaching and training to strengthen understanding and motivation; the participating style is used in tactical decision-making to enhance decision quality and team cohesion; while the delegating style is implemented for highly mature personnel as a form of trust and empowerment. These findings confirm that leadership flexibility is a key factor in maintaining command stability while promoting personnel capacity development.

Theoretically, this study reinforces the relevance of situational leadership theory within high-risk military organizations by demonstrating that leadership effectiveness is determined not only by subordinate characteristics but also by the complexity and urgency of operational situations. Practically, the findings imply that leadership training in military settings should emphasize situational diagnosis skills, behavioral flexibility, and strategic communication competencies. The limitation of this study lies in its qualitative approach and the limited number of informants from a single unit, thus generalization of the findings should be undertaken with caution. Therefore, future

research is recommended to combine qualitative and quantitative approaches or conduct comparative studies across units to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of situational leadership effectiveness in military and other high-risk organizational contexts.

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**Authors' Contribution**

All authors contributed equally to the development of this article.

**Data availability**

All datasets relevant to this study's findings are fully available within the article.

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