# Association between Organisational Commitment, Coping Styles, Locus of Control and Training Attitudes among Military Cadets

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## ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, military base camp training programs are predominantly centred on physical and military skills while the equally crucial aspect of cadet psychological well-being is often insufficiently addressed. The current research aims to investigate the association between coping styles, locus of control, training attitudes (training self-efficacy, transfer intentions) and organisational commitment as a control variable among military trainee cadets. This study included 887 cadets recruited via Purposive Sampling. Participants completed a questionnaire including The BRIEF-Coping, Work locus of control, Organisational commitment, Training self-efficacy and Transfer implementation intention. Hierarchical regression analysis revealed that organizational commitment alone explained 23.2% of the variance in training self-efficacy, while adding coping styles and locus of control increased the explained variance by 31.7%, with problem-focused coping and internal locus of control as significant predictors. For transfer intentions, organizational commitment explained 3.7% of the variance, and adding coping styles and locus of control increased the explained variance by 5.4%, with significant contributions from organizational commitment and internal locus of control. These findings suggest that integrating psychological assessments into recruitment processes could enhance the selection of cadets who are better equipped to handle the demands of military training.

**Keywords**: Commitment, Training, Self-efficacy, Transfer Intention, Training Effectiveness

## INTRODUCTION

Training is a structured process aimed at enhancing individual and group performance by developing knowledge, skills, and attitudes (Mamaqi, 2023; Maulana, 2023). Training is strategically crafted to enhance organizational effectiveness and drive success (Abdul Aziz, 2017). Training serves dual functions: it not only addresses current job demands but also prepares individuals for future roles, thereby enabling effective contribution, personal growth, and organizational success (Maulana, 2023). The ultimate objective is to ensure that individuals apply learned skills effectively, strengthening their competence in the field (Manzoor et al., 2019). Possessing the appropriate personality traits, mindset, determination, hardiness, and resilience, as well as values and motivations consistent with military principles, better prepares individuals to withstand rigorous training and challenging real-life scenarios (Shariff et al., 2022). Moreover, cultivating positive attitudes can improve the outcomes of training programs (Aziz & Ahmad, 2011; Nor & Smith, 2018; Nor & Smith, 2019). By merging knowledge with practice, training fosters a capable and adaptable workforce, essential for organizational resilience in an evolving work environment.

In the military, the physical fitness of cadets has traditionally been crucial, encompassing qualities like strength, agility, and flexibility (Crawley et al., 2015). Basic training aims to reach fitness levels that enable cadets to progress to advanced phases or meet job requirements. For professional soldiers, maintaining physical fitness is essential for deployment and job readiness (Kyröläinen et al., 2018). Military camps in Malaysia emphasize physical and military skills, such as fitness training, marching, and weapons handling. However, psychological well-being, an equally important aspect for cadets, is often overlooked in these

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regimens.

Military training settings present unique challenges that require effective coping strategies to sustain optimal performance and well-being. Research highlights that negative coping styles correlate with lower resilience, impairing military personnel's ability to adopt positive strategies (Zou et al., 2024). Factors like low neuroticism, emotion-focused coping, and mindfulness have shown to improve adaptability in unpredictable situations (Fornette et al., 2023). Resilience training, which involves self-reflection and insights into coping mechanisms, further strengthens cadets' ability to handle stress effectively (Falon et al., 2022). For military medical students, strategies like fostering social connections and exercise help maintain well-being and prevent burnout (Ma et al., 2023).

Locus of Control (LoC) is another key factor in military training, influencing leadership style and resilience. An internal LoC is linked to a proactive and adaptable leadership style, qualities highly valued in military leaders (Kumar & RK, 2023). Studies also show that a strong internal LoC in parents can lead to better peer adjustments in children from military families, underscoring LoC's significance in family and social dynamics (Piehler et al., 2016). Additionally, military trainees with an internal LoC are more likely to engage in general training due to the perceived value of their efforts, highlighting LoC's impact on training participation (Caliendo et al., 2020). Assessing LoC in military personnel thus holds promise for enhancing leadership, resilience, and mission success.

Training self-efficacy is essential in military training, as it directly impacts soldiers' ability to maintain an active lifestyle and improve their physical fitness. Studies on Finnish conscripts show that exercise self-efficacy correlates positively with physical fitness and body composition (Kekäläinen et al., 2024). Furthermore, psychological resilience can moderate the link between self-efficacy and perceived military competence, enhancing skill development for soldiers with different motivational levels (Bekesiene et al., 2022). Research on cadets highlights that self-efficacy fosters mental readiness and specialized military skills (Manesi, 2022). Additionally, a study on healthcare professionals shows that training can significantly increase training self-efficacy in supporting cancer patients with young children (Johannsen et al., 2023).

Transfer intentions are crucial for ensuring that training benefits translate into job performance. Evidence suggests that setting post-training intentions improves the likelihood of applying acquired skills (Greenan, 2023; Friedman & Ronen, 2015). The use of 'if/then' plans further strengthens goal alignment, bridging training objectives with practical outcomes in the military (Greenan et al., 2017). Effective transfer also depends on factors such as training climate, self-efficacy, and motivation, with negative affectivity serving as a predictor for reduced transfer intentions (Machin & Fogarty, 2004).

Organizational commitment is a vital third variable across diverse organizational settings. It has been shown to bridge the gap between training and employee performance, influenced by organizational culture (Rifandani et al., 2023). Organizational commitment mediates perceived organizational support, especially in situations with job insecurity (Hngoi et al., 2024). It also mediates the relationship between collective efficacy and individual performance, highlighting its role in enhancing productivity (Senbursa, 2023). In sectors like academia, commitment aids talent retention and staff performance (Aliyu et al., 2023). Furthermore, in corporate settings, organizational commitment mediates between well-being and workload, indirectly impacting performance (Matondang et al., 2023).

In this study, organizational commitment is included as a control variable due to its significant impact on outcomes like job performance and retention. Given its function as a mediator and moderator, controlling for organizational commitment is essential to isolate its influence from the main variables under investigation—coping styles, LoC, training self-efficacy, and transfer intentions. Thus, this research investigates the association between coping styles, LoC, training self-efficacy, transfer intentions, and organizational commitment (as a control variable) among military cadets. The study, involving cadets in a base camp setting, explores variables commonly studied in military contexts. This research at the intersection of training and military studies could inform recruitment and selection processes for future cadet candidates, potentially setting standards for acceptance into the armed forces.

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### Research objectives

1. To examine the significant correlation between organisational commitment, coping styles, locus of control and training attitudes among military cadets

2. Organisational commitment act as a control variable in the relationship between coping styles, locus of control and training attitudes among military cadets

### Research questions

1. Is there significant correlation between organisational commitment, coping styles, locus of control and training attitudes among military cadets

3. Does organisational commitment act as a control variable in the relationship between coping styles, locus of control and training attitudes among military cadets

### Research Problem

While significant attention has been given to the physiological demands of military training, such as physical activity, energy deficit, and sleep restriction, and their impact on physical performance and injuries, there is a notable lack of emphasis on the psychological aspects influencing cadet performance (Bekesiene, 2023; Khraban, 2022; Kishchuk and Osodlo, 2023). Studies have established that the physiological challenges of military training often lead to negative mood changes and impairments in cognitive and psychological functioning (Harris & Cameron, 2005). However, research investigating the psychological factors, such as coping styles, LoC, and training self-efficacy, which are crucial for maintaining performance and resilience in demanding environments, remains limited.

Moreover, while psychological attributes such as grit, hardiness, and resilience have been acknowledged as important for cadet success, existing training programs, particularly in Malaysia, predominantly focus on physical and military skills training, neglecting the psychological preparedness of cadets (Evans et al., 2023; Tornero-Aguilera et al., 2024). This oversight is concerning, given the evidence linking psychological fitness with reduced attrition rates and improved mental health outcomes (Crawley et al., 2015). Additionally, most research on dropout and attrition has centered on physical injuries, leaving the psychological dimensions relatively unexplored (Dijksma et al., 2020).

Addressing this gap, the current study seeks to explore the association between coping styles, LoC, training self-efficacy, and transfer intentions among military cadets, while considering organizational commitment as a control variable. By integrating psychological factors into the investigation, this research aims to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of cadet performance and retention in military training, emphasizing the importance of psychological fitness alongside physical readiness.

## RESEARCH METHOD

### Participants

A total of 887 trainee cadets participated in the cross-sectional survey, which utilised purposive sampling. The important criterion for the research participants was being enrolled full-time as students and undergoing trainee cadet training in Malaysia. The respondents comprised 801 males (90.3%), 514 individuals (57.9%) aged 19-21 years and ethnic composition was predominantly Malay (809, 91.2%).

Table 1. Demographic information

| Demographic | | Frequency | Percentage (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Age | 19-21 | 514 | 57.9 |

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| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 22 and above | 373 | 42.1 |
| Gender | Male | 801 | 90.3 |
| | Female | 86 | 9.7 |
| Race | Malay | 809 | 91.2 |
| | Chinese | 16 | 1.8 |
| | Indian | 33 | 3.7 |
| | Others | 29 | 3.3 |

**Procedures**

Prior to beginning data collection, the research team obtained a collaboration approval letter from the Ministry of Defence Malaysia. This letter granted permission for the researchers to access the military training centre. Approval for this study was granted by the UKM Research Ethics Committee under reference number UKM PPI/111/8/JEP-2023-100. Upon arrival at the military training centre, participants received a briefing on the study and an explanation of their rights before starting the questionnaires. The questionnaires were then distributed, and participants were given an hour to complete them. The participants were encouraged to ask questions if they had difficulty understanding any items and were allowed to take breaks as needed.

**Measurements**

*Coping styles* Trainee cadets reported coping styles using The Brief-Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (Carver, 1997). This inventory was developed to assess the different coping strategies people use in response to stress. There are two main domains which consist of problem-focused coping (active coping, planning, suppression, restraint, seeking of instrumental social support) and emotion-focused coping (seeking of emotional social support, positive reinterpretation, acceptance, denial, turning to religion). In total, the scale includes 28 items measured on a 4-point Likert scale (1 = Not at all to 4 = Doing a lot). Examples of items include, “I’ve been accepting the reality of the fact that it has happened” and “I’ve been getting emotional support from others.” The Cronbach’s alpha is 0.838.

*Locus of Control* Trainee cadets reported their locus of control using Work Locus of Control (Spector, 1992). This instrument measures individual beliefs about jobs in general. The scale comprises three domains: internal locus of control, powerful others, and chance. It contains 16 items measured on a 6-point Likert scale (-3 = Strongly disagree to +3 = Strongly agree). Examples of items include “If you know what you want out of a job, you can find a job that gives it to you” and “Most people are capable of doing their jobs well if they make the effort.” The Cronbach’s alpha is 0.897.

*Organisational commitments* Trainee cadets reported their organisational commitments using Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (Mowday, Steers & Porter 1979). This measurement assesses employee commitment to their workplace. It includes 15 items rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree). Examples of items are “I feel very little loyalty to this organization (R)” and “I am extremely glad that I chose this organization to work for over others I was considering at the time I joined.” The Cronbach’s alpha is 0.795.

*Self-efficacy* Trainee cadets reported their self-efficacy using adapted from New General Self-Efficacy Scale (Chen, Gully & Eden 2001). This measurement assesses individual’s self-efficacy in the context of training. It includes eight items measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). Examples of items are “I will be able to achieve most of the goals that I set for myself” and “I am confident that I can perform effectively on many different tasks.” The Cronbach’s alpha is 0.857.

*Transfer intentions* Trainee cadets reported their transfer intentions using Transfer Implementation Intention (Machin & Fogarty, 2004). This instrument assesses trainee's intention to engage in specific behaviour that would facilitate transfer of their skills. It includes 11 items measured on a 10-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly disagree to 10 = Strongly agree). Examples of items are "I will examine my work environment for potential barriers to using the skills that I have learned" and "I will monitor my success at using the skills that I have learned." The Cronbach's alpha is 0.958.

**Data Analysis**

The data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics 25, utilising both descriptive and inferential techniques such as correlation and hierarchical regression. Pearson correlation analysis was essential to examine the relationships between coping style, LoC, organisational commitment, self-efficacy, and transfer intentions. Hierarchical regression was applied to investigate the links between coping style, LoC, self-efficacy, and transfer intentions, with organisational commitment acting as a mediator.

## RESULTS

**To examine the significant correlation between organisational commitment, coping styles, locus of control and training attitudes among military cadets**

Table 2 shows correlation analysis between all variables (N=887), the result of training self-efficacy indicates significant positive correlation between training self-efficacy; organisational commitment, problem focused, emotion focused, and internal LoC, with correlation coefficient ranging from .196 to .481. Meanwhile for transfer intention, the result indicates significant positive correlation between transfer intention; organisational commitment, problem focused, emotion focused, internal LoC and self-efficacy, with correlation coefficient ranging from .067 to .311.

Table 2. Correlation analysis between all variables

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Organisational commitment (1) | 1 | | | | | | | | |
| Problem focused (2) | .361** | 1 | | | | | | | |
| Emotion focused (3) | 0.04 | .574** | 1 | | | | | | |
| Avoidant (4) | -.275** | .070* | .450** | 1 | | | | | |
| Internal (5) | .296** | .483** | .373** | .077* | 1 | | | | |
| Powerful others (6) | -.190** | .119** | .338** | .354** | .424** | 1 | | | |
| Chance (7) | -.184** | .104** | .365** | .386** | .390** | .754** | 1 | | |
| Self-efficacy (8) | .481** | .404** | .196** | -0.05 | .382** | 0.042 | 0 | 1 | |
| Transfer intention (9) | .192** | .151** | .067* | -0.022 | .202** | 0.041 | 0.054 | .311** | 1 |

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**Organisational commitment act as a control variable between coping styles, locus of control and training attitudes among military cadets**

Table 3 illustrate the hierarchical regression analysis, where organizational commitment (Model I) was

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regarded as the control variable, training self-efficacy and transfer intention as the dependent variables, and coping style and LoC (Model II) as the input.

The results indicate that, with training self-efficacy as the dependent variable, Model I, which included only organizational commitment as the predictor, significantly explained 23.2% of the variance ($F(1,885)=267.074, p<.001$). Model II, which added three dimensions of coping styles (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant) and three dimensions of LoC (internal, powerful others, and chance), explained significantly more variance, with an $R^2$ change of 0.317 ($F(6,879)=19.618, p<.001$). The significant predictors in Model II were organizational commitment, problem focused coping and internal LoC.

The results indicate that, with transfer intentions as the dependent variable, Model I, which included only organizational commitment as the predictor, significantly explained 3.7% of the variance ($F(1, 885) = 34.018$, $p < .001$). Model II, which added three dimensions of coping styles (problem-focused, emotion-focused, and avoidant) and three dimensions of LoC (internal, powerful others, and chance), explained slightly more variance, with an $R^2$ change of 0.054 ($F(6, 879) = 3.877$, $p < .001$). The significant predictors in Model II were organizational commitment and internal LoC.

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analysis

| Dependent variable | Training self-efficacy | | | | | | Transfer Intentions | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Independent variable | Model I | | | Model II | | | Model I | | | Model II | | |
| Step (1) | β | t | p | β | t | p | β | t | p | β | t | p |
| Organisational Commitment | 0.029 | 16.342 | 0.000 | 0.022 | 10.992 | 0.000 | 0.315 | 5.833 | 0.000 | 0.231 | 3.603 | 0.000 |
| Step (2) | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Problem focused | | | | 0.034 | 4.489 | 0.000 | | | | 0.240 | 1.004 | 0.316 |
| Emotion focused | | | | 0.001 | 0.088 | 0.930 | | | | -0.114 | -0.619 | 0.536 |
| Avoidant | | | | 0.007 | 0.976 | 0.329 | | | | 0.033 | 0.148 | 0.882 |
| Internal | | | | 0.018 | 5.196 | 0.000 | | | | 0.355 | 3.214 | 0.001 |
| Powerful others | | | | 0.005 | 1.354 | 0.176 | | | | -0.055 | -0.509 | 0.611 |
| Chance | | | | -0.007 | -1.952 | 0.051 | | | | 0.104 | 0.941 | 0.347 |
| $R^2$ | | 0.232 | | | 0.323 | | | 0.037 | | | 0.062 | |
| $\Delta R^2$ | | 0.231 | | | 0.317 | | | 0.036 | | | 0.054 | |
| F change | | 267.074 | | | 19.618 | | | 34.018 | | | 3.877 | |
| Sig. F change | | 0.000 | | | 0.000 | | | 0.000 | | | 0.001 | |

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# DISCUSSION

The research aims to investigate the association between coping styles, LoC, training self-efficacy, transfer intentions, and organisational commitment as a control variable among military trainee cadets. Regression analysis results show significant associations of organizational commitment, problem focused coping and internal LoC significantly associated with training self-efficacy. Additionally, organizational commitment and internal LoC are significantly related to transfer intention. The findings suggest that organisational commitment plays a significant control variable role, enhancing trainees' motivation and their intention to apply learned skills. Through these insights, the research provides a comprehensive understanding of how adaptive coping strategies and internal LoC contribute to positive outcomes in military training, aligning with its intended goals.

The correlation analysis for training self-efficacy demonstrates significant positive associations with organizational commitment, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, and internal LoC. This indicates that cadets who show strong commitment to their organization, use proactive coping strategies, and perceive a personal control over outcomes tend to have higher self-efficacy in training settings. This relationship underscores the importance of fostering self-efficacy to improve coping strategies (problem-focused and emotion-focused) suggests that cadets feel more capable in training when they believe they can confront challenges or manage stress effectively (Poluektova et al., 2023). Furthermore, Page et al. (2023) demonstrated that identity factors influence the choice of coping strategies, reinforcing the multifaceted approach to coping that enhances self-efficacy and organisational commitment in military contexts. Additionally, the relationship between internal LoC and self-efficacy supports existing research, which finds that individuals who attribute success to their own efforts tend to have greater confidence in their skills (Tantanawat, 2020). These findings collectively underscore the importance of adaptive coping strategies in promoting positive outcomes in military training and mental health.

Meanwhile, for transfer intention, significant positive correlations were found with organizational commitment, problem-focused coping, emotion-focused coping, LoC, and self-efficacy. This pattern suggests that cadets with high organizational commitment and self-efficacy are more likely to apply training knowledge and skills in practical settings. The associations between transfer intention and coping styles further imply that cadets using active coping strategies are more inclined to implement what they learn (Friedman & Ronen, 2015). Moreover, the link with internal LoC highlights the role of self-perception in motivating cadets to apply their skills, as those who believe they influence outcomes are more driven to use their training (Caliendo et al., 2020). These findings emphasize the value of cultivating organizational commitment, self-efficacy, and adaptive coping mechanisms to improve training effectiveness and the likelihood of skill transfer in military environments.

Internal LoC and organisational commitment emerged as a central construct in the correlation analysis, showing positive associations with training self-efficacy and transfer intention. This finding reinforces the theoretical premise that individuals with a strong internal LoC are more likely to believe in their ability to influence outcomes, thereby enhancing their confidence and commitment to organisational goals that strive for training self-efficacy and transfer intention. Studies reveal that individuals with a strong internal LoC tend to be more proactive in their learning, perceiving that their own efforts directly impact training outcomes, which in turn boosts their self-efficacy and commitment to their organization (Tantanawat, 2020; Cascio et al., 2013). Additionally, organizational commitment has been found to mediate the link between self-efficacy and job performance, suggesting that employees who are more committed are better able to apply acquired skills in their roles (Krisnayanti & Sriathi, 2022). Furthermore, commitment to the organization significantly affects support for training transfer, reinforcing that high commitment levels facilitate the effective use of training in the workplace (Yaqub et al., 2021). Therefore, promoting both an internal LoC and organizational commitment is essential for enhancing training self-efficacy and transfer intention.

The employees with higher organisational commitment are more likely to feel capable of mastering training content and intend to apply learned skills. When employees undergo training, it fosters a sense of being valued by the organisation, enhancing their loyalty and dedication (Yan et al., 2022). This process instils a strong sense of purpose by aligning them with the military’s mission, reinforces their contributions through

recognition, and fosters camaraderie. These elements together deepen their commitment and dedication to their roles and the military organisation. This finding highlights the critical role of organisational commitment in not only shaping employees' perceptions of their abilities (Hasan & Chowdhury, 2023) but also in fostering the motivation to transfer training outcomes to the workplace. The study also demonstrates that organisational commitment adds incremental predictive validity beyond coping styles and LoC.

## CONCLUSION

In summary, the present study highlights the critical roles of internal LoC and organisational commitment in shaping training self-efficacy and transfer intentions. The findings emphasise the importance of fostering a sense of control and commitment among employees to enhance training efficacy and skill application. Despite the study's limitations, it contributes to the growing body of literature on the psychological factors that underpin effective training and skill transfer in organisational settings. Future research should continue to explore these complex relationships, considering potential moderating and mediating factors, to develop more targeted interventions that enhance employee outcomes and organisational success.

While the study offers valuable insights, it is essential to address some limitations and areas for future research. First, the reliance on self-reported measures may introduce response biases, such as social desirability or common method variance, which could inflate correlations. Future studies should consider incorporating objective measures or multiple data sources to mitigate these biases. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the study limits the ability to draw causal inferences. Longitudinal designs could provide a more robust examination of the temporal relationships between the studied variables, particularly in understanding how changes in coping styles, LoC influence organisational commitment and training outcomes over time. Finally, the sample's demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, or cultural background, were not considered in the analysis. These factors could influence the generalizability of the findings, as coping styles and perceptions of control may vary across different demographic groups. Including demographic variables as covariates or examining subgroup analyses could offer more nuanced insights.

While the study has certain limitations, such as reliance on self-reported measures and a cross-sectional design, it also possesses notable strengths, including the use of validated scales and the comprehensive assessment of psychological constructs. These strengths provide a solid foundation for understanding the complex relationships between coping styles, LoC, self-efficacy, and organisational outcomes. Future research should address the identified limitations, particularly by incorporating longitudinal designs and considering demographic characteristics to provide a more nuanced understanding of these constructs in various organisational context.

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